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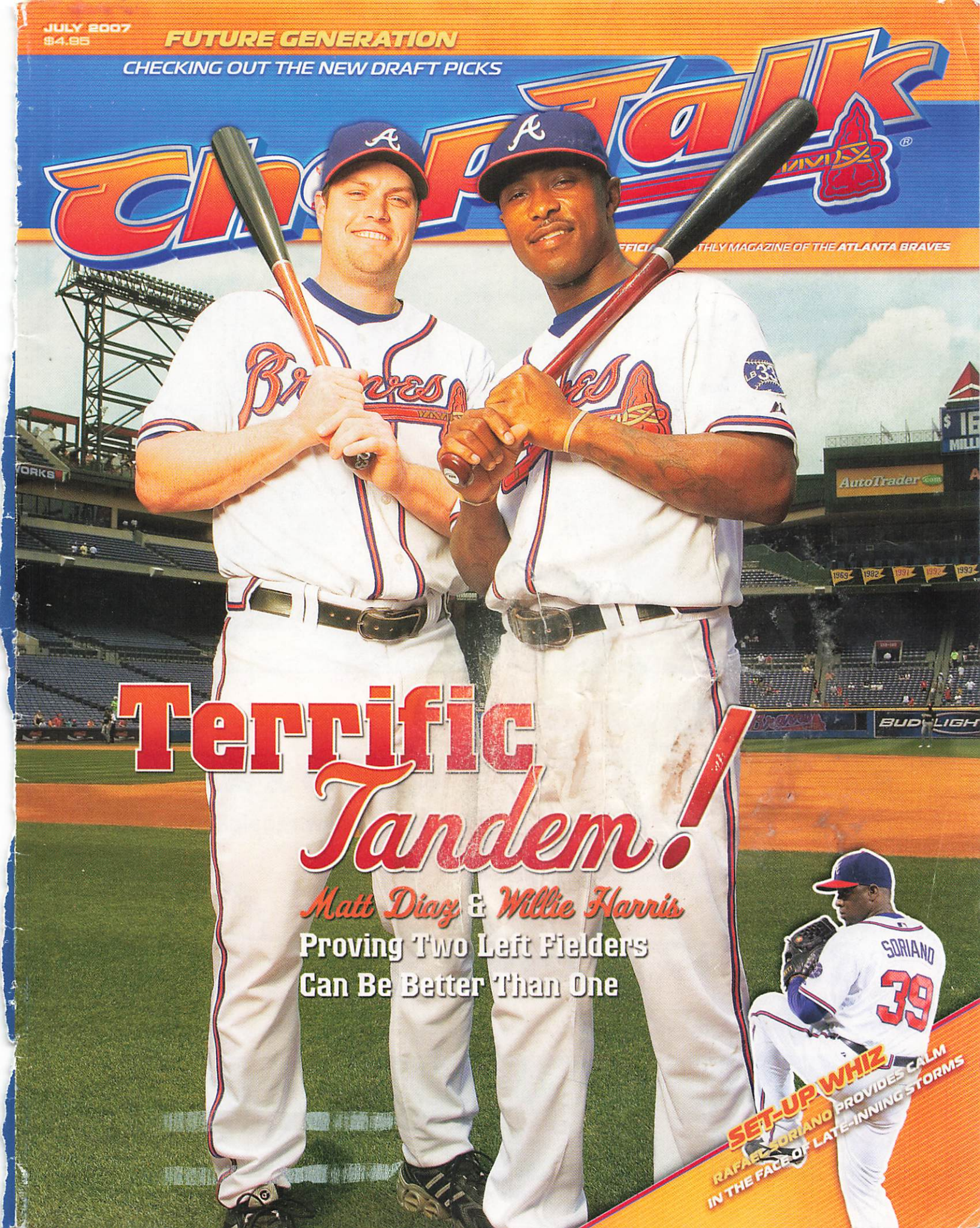

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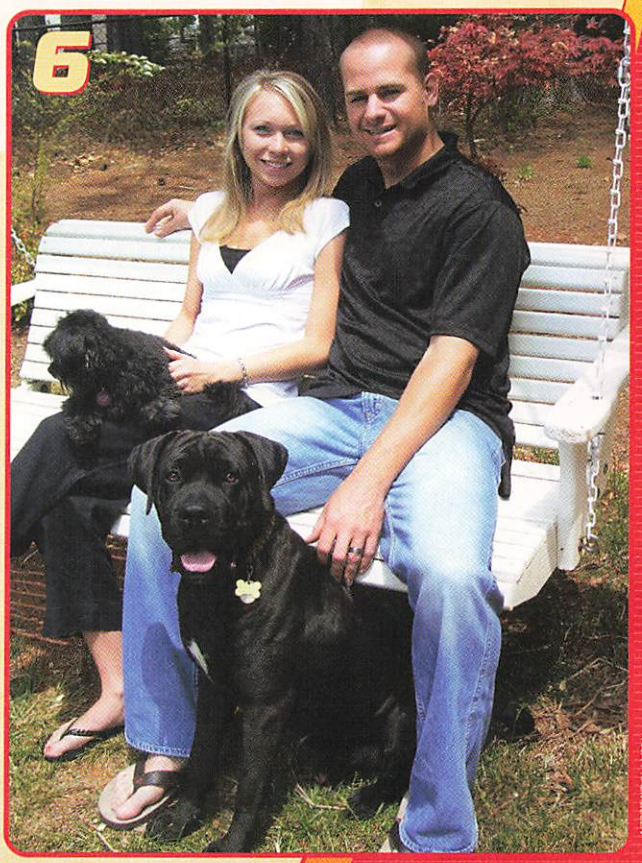
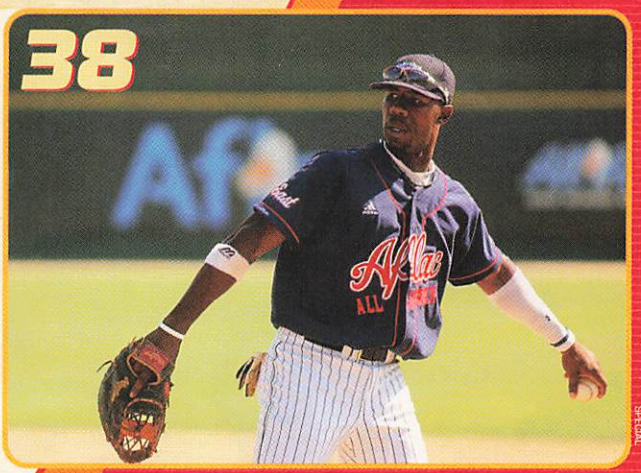


PATTY RASMUSSEN



SPECIAL

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COVER CREDITS

MATT DIAZ AND WILLIE HARRIS by Allison Shirreffs

Rafael Soriano by Allison Shirreffs

Design by Clark Odom

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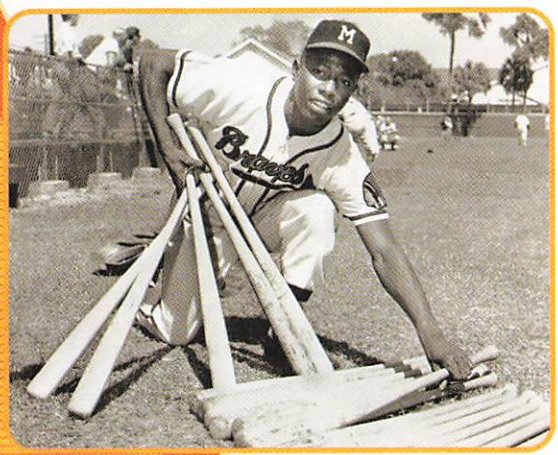

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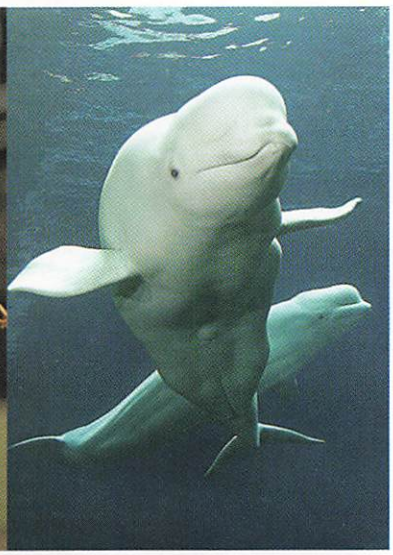

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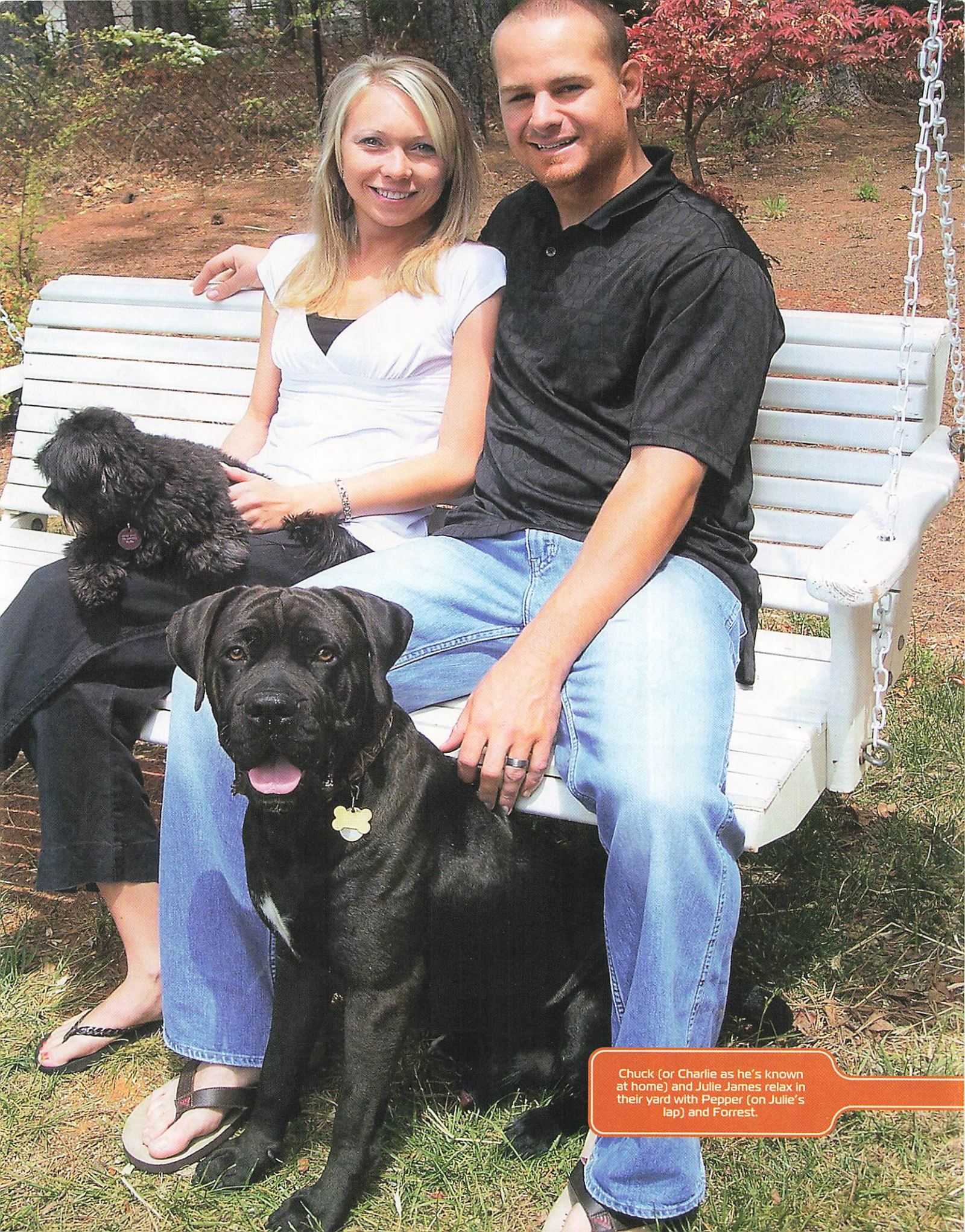

Chuck (or Charlie as he's known at home) and Julie James relax in their yard with Pepper (on Julie's lap) and Forrest.

CHUCK & JULIE JAMES

The James home is a three-bedroom, two-and-a-half bath, traditional Cape Cod house originally furnished with lawn chairs and hand-me-downs.

BY PATTY RASMUSSEN

Chuck James was around 10 years old and playing in Little League the first time someone, one of his young teammates, ever called him "Chuck." And despite the fact that he was always "Charlie" to his family and closest friends, the nickname stuck to the easygoing, left-handed pitcher.

While the baseball world may call him "Chuck," he's still "Charlie" at his Atlanta-area home.

James' wife, Julie, whom he's known since high school, calls him Charlie, and reminders of that fact are evident throughout the couple's home. "Julie & Charlie," reads the caption on the portrait hanging over the living room mantle.

The two met, officially, when they were 14 years old, at a company picnic at Stone Mountain. Little did they know then that their lives would continue to intersect due, in part, to their mothers' long-time friendship.

"We knew each other mostly through our moms," said Julie. "I even went on a trip once with his mom and my mom. But he was wild, and I wasn't!"

Seven years after their initial meeting, the couple began "hanging out" together as friends after a dinner between families generated some interest. Gradually, they began dating as Chuck/Charlie made his way through the minor leagues and Julie worked at an Atlanta area medical office where she continues to put in some part-time hours. The two have a sense of destiny about being together.

"Until second grade, we lived five minutes from each other, and our birthdays are only 14 hours apart," said Julie, who was born Nov. 8, 1981. Chuck's birthday is Nov. 9, 1981.

Though married last November, the couple found, purchased, and furnished the three-bedroom, two-and-a-half bath, traditionally styled Cape Cod home in February 2006.

"It stayed pretty empty until after Charlie got home from spring training," said Julie. "We sat in lawn chairs in the living room and had little things from the Dollar Tree or hand-me-downs from our parents. By April or so, we started buying furniture."

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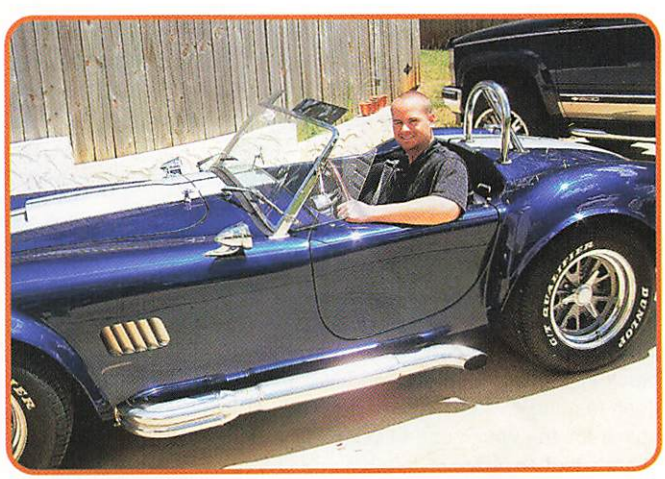


When James starts the 475-horsepower engine in this 1965 Shelby Cobra Roadster replica, the whole neighborhood knows it!

PHOTOS/ PATTY RASMUSSEN

A striking metal and glass coffee table (complete with a copy of ChopTalk) rests on a colorful geometric-print area rug in the living room.

PHOTOS/PATTY RASMUSSEN

CONTINUED FROM PRECEDING PAGE

They started with the living room, painted "bungalow gold" offset with a grey stone fireplace and an oak mantle. The furnishings include a comfortable, dark taupe sofa, loveseat, and easy chair arrangement complemented by striking metal and glass occasional tables and a colorful geometric-print area rug.

Chuck settles into a chair facing the large-screen television, sighs, and says, "This is my chair." Pepper, a Chihuahua/Shitzu mix and the smaller of their two dogs, leaps into his lap, making herself comfortable.

Their little family is rounded out by Forrest, a glossy, pit bull/black lab mix. A roadside rescue thanks to Julie, Forrest looks tough and has a penchant for good-natured slobbering. His charm makes it easier to shrug off the fact that he's knocked out all the screens on the porch and chews through wood!

The couple decided to use what would be the formal dining room as an office, furnishing the room with an oak office desk/computer hutch combination. Julie describes the wall color above and below the chair rail as "cranberries and cream." Though the room is used as a way station for miscellaneous belongings, there is one distinctive memento sitting atop the computer hutch. It's a miniature replica of a lighthouse, a reminder of the Tybee Island lighthouse off the coast of Savannah, Ga., where they were engaged on Nov.11, 2005, one year to the day prior to their wedding.

A combination kitchen and dining area round out the main downstairs rooms of their home. The gold walls are a counterpoint to the gray countertops and shiny black appliances. Tall bay windows and a door leading to the (formerly) screened-in porch create a cozy space for the warm oak Mission style dining set, comprised of a slightly higher bistro style table and chairs.

Three bedrooms are located upstairs. "I claimed one room as a 'junk' room," said Julie, and the couple shares a large master bedroom furnished with a Mission style bedroom suite with cranberry and cream bed linens.

Two dog crates are also in the master bedroom since Pepper and Forrest are generally allowed to sleep indoors. French doors lead from the bedroom to the master bathroom. At this point, no artwork hangs on the walls, but the third bedroom, "Charlie's room," more than makes up for the lack of wall décor anywhere else in the house.

There is a bed in Charlie's room, but the rest of the room is a shrine to baseball and to his career. Hung from the crown molding around the top of the walls is a cap from every season of base-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

The master bedroom features colorful cranberry and cream linens and Mission style furniture.

WELCOME TO THE BIGS.

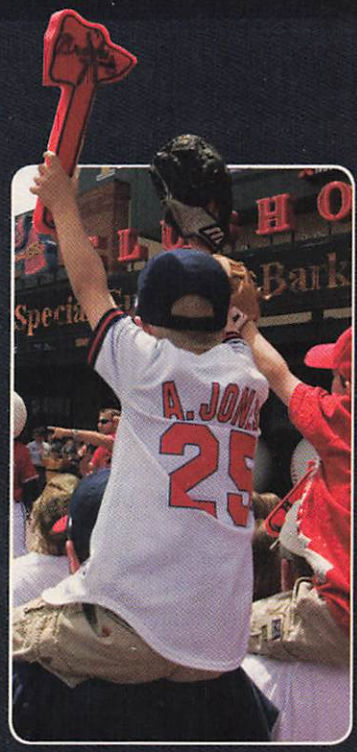
Schedule your JULY line-up

Braves vs Pirates | JULY 13th, 14th, 15th

13 FRI 7:35 PM
Firefighters Appreciation Night
Fire trucks will be on display in front of the stadium
Publix Friday Night Fireworks
Enjoy fireworks after the game

14 SAT 7:05 PM
Christmas in July
Santa and snow in the Plaza
Please bring a toy to donate to the Toy Drive

15 SUN 1:05 PM
All-Star Sunday
Alumni appearances by Adrian Devine, Craig Skok and Billy O'Dell
Kids run the bases after the game



Braves vs Reds | JULY 16th, 17th, 18th

16 MON 7:05 PM
Braves Rally Poster
Presented by Chick-fil-A to the first 8,000 fans

17 TUE 7:35 PM
Coca-Cola 2-for-1 Tuesdays
Buy One Get One FREE Tickets

18 WED 1:05 PM
McDonald's® Outfield Advantage
Buy One Get One FREE Tickets
Business Fan Special
Play hooky from work or bring your VIP clients to watch the game

Braves vs Cardinals | JULY 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd

19 THU 7:35 PM
Brian McCann Statue Night
Presented by Coca-Cola to the first 15,000 fans
Topps Ticket Thursdays
Buy One Get One FREE Tickets

20 FRI 7:35 PM
Publix Friday Night Fireworks
Enjoy fireworks after the game
Foundation Weekend
Shop for and bid on Braves memorabilia

21 SAT 7:05 PM
Braves Rally Flag: Presented by NAPA to the first 45,000 fans
Foundation Weekend: Shop for and bid on Braves memorabilia
NASCAR Night
NASCAR stock cars around the field

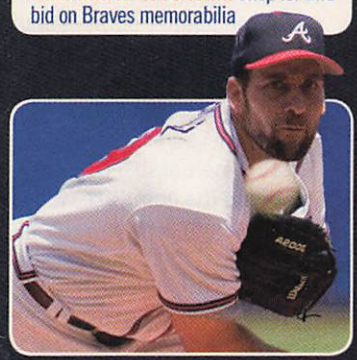
22 SUN 1:05 PM
All-Star Sunday
Alumni appearances by Arnold Umbach, Charlie O'Brien and Bruce Sutter
Kids run the bases after the game
Foundation Weekend: Shop for and bid on Braves memorabilia

Braves vs Astros | JULY 31st, AUGUST 1st, 2nd

31 TUE 7:35 PM
Braves Cap
Presented by DHL to the first 20,000 fans
Coca-Cola 2-for-1 Tuesdays
Buy One Get One FREE Tickets

1 WED 7:35 PM
McDonald's® Outfield Advantage
Buy One Get One FREE Tickets

2 THU 7:35 PM
Brian McCann T-Shirt Night
Presented by Delta to the first 10,000 fans
Topps Ticket Thursdays
Buy One Get One FREE Tickets



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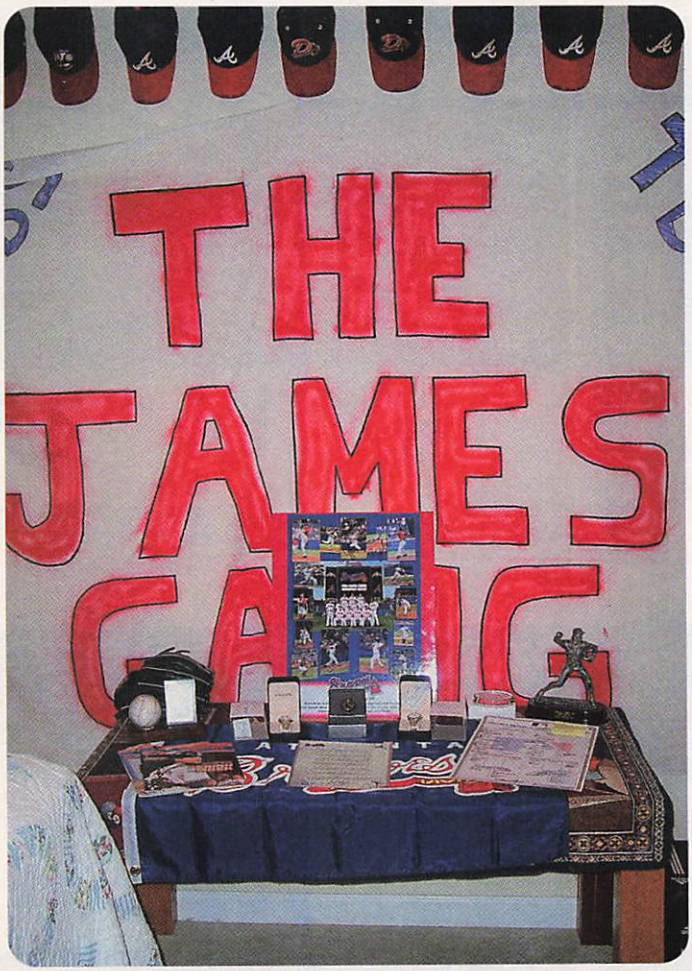
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

ball he's played from Pebblebrook High School in Mableton, Ga., to Chattahoochee Valley Community College and throughout the Braves' farm system and his rookie year with Atlanta. The salt stains from sweat are visible, and Chuck and Julie agree that if it weren't for continual air freshener, the room would have an overwhelming bouquet!

"We keep the air freshener on and the door open," said Julie.

A framed copy of Chuck's $75,000 signing bonus check hangs on the wall, and a sign with Braves uniforms through the history of the franchise which reads, "Some Teams Are More Equal Than Others," rests on the headboard of the bed.

A tall bookshelf is filled with items like a (Braves minor league manager) Rocket Wheeler bobblehead doll, a picture of Chuck and Joey Devine celebrating the Braves' 14th straight division title in 2005 when the two were September callups. A signed Brian McCann catcher's mitt sits on a shelf next to Chuck's battered, old mitt from his own catching days.



Chuck's cap collection - complete with sweat stains - hangs above memorabilia from his career - including a sign some of his friends displayed at Turner Field.

A special wooden case with a glass door holds a collection of autographed baseballs including a row of minor league team balls, and balls with signatures of Ken Griffey Jr., Mike Piazza, Derek Jeter, Roger Clemens, Dale Murphy and Hank Aaron. There's also the game ball from Chuck's win on Sept. 29, 2006, "When I beat (Roger) Clemens," he said with a grin.

A large banner spray-painted with big red letters reading "The James Gang" hangs on the wall.

"Some friends of mine went to a game and hung that banner at Turner Field," said Chuck.

Now the banner serves as a backdrop to a table display of Chuck's memorabilia.

Among the items are two wristwatches - minor league player-of-the-month awards - a trophy citing James as the 2004 Rome Braves MVP Pitcher, two issues of ChopTalk (Feb. 2006 and Aug. 2006) which featured James, and most prominently, the lineup card from his first major league win, June 25, 2006 vs. Tampa Bay. The post-it note with the message, "For Chuck James, 1st win," written by Bobby Cox is still on the lineup card. It's a prized possession.

The couple calls their backyard a work in progress. Formerly overgrown when the previous owner left, it was recently cleared and yielded a few pleasant surprises. A large rosemary bush scents the air near the wooden swing, and several hydrangea and azalea bushes were uncovered. A flowering dogwood tree bloomed in early spring, and the rest of the summer promises more horticultural surprises as plants continue to bloom and grow.

Even at this level of his career, Chuck has been able to indulge his longtime passion for classic cars. He currently owns, and often drives to Turner Field, a snazzy cobalt blue 1965 Shelby Cobra Roadster replica. When James cranks the 475-horsepower engine, everyone in the neighborhood knows.

"I had a guy come running over one day when I was pulling out," said James. "He told me he heard me starting it up and wanted to see it!"

The car was built in 2006 for approximately $44,000.

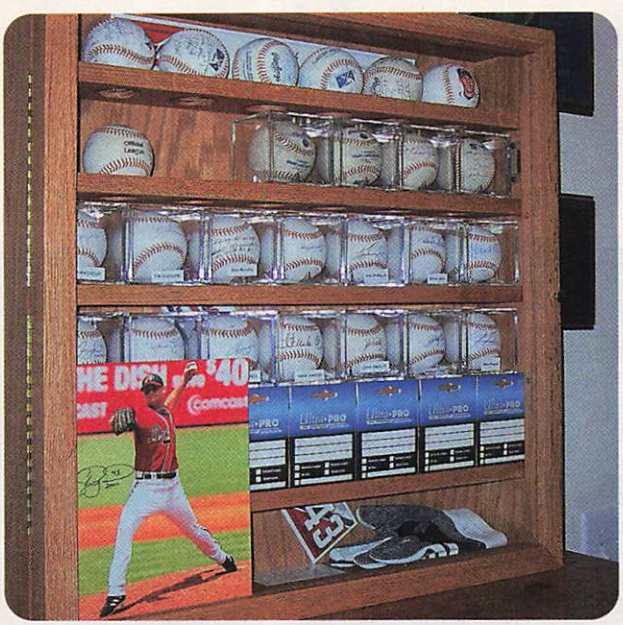
"I was always into fast cars," said Chuck. "I thought this would be a good investment."

He said he got a little nervous while the car was being built.

"I had been winning pretty steadily and then lost a couple and thought, 'Maybe I shouldn't buy it.' But then I started winning again and figured, what the heck!"

But even now, Chuck said he can't quite believe his good fortune, pitching for the Atlanta Braves, married to Julie, owning a home and a dream car. It's one of the reasons he's kept his off-season job, installing windows for a sub-contractor.

"Hey, you never know what's going to happen in baseball," said James. "Besides, I don't like to just sit around."



This collection of baseballs includes one from James' 4-1 decision over Houston and Roger Clemens last Sept. 29.

PHOTOS/PATTY RASMUSSEN

PAINTING THE CORNERS

BY JAY BUSBEE

THE UPS AND DOWNS OF THE ANDRUW COASTER

ASTRONAUTS TRAIN for trips into space by riding on the "Vomit Comet," a specially modified airplane that simulates weightlessness by flying to cruising altitude, then shooting straight down, then straight back up, over and over again. The weightlessness is a euphoric feeling, by all accounts, but it doesn't last forever. The plane didn't earn its nickname for nothing. For every high, there's an excruciating low.

Fans of Andruw Jones are all too familiar with the path of the Vomit Comet. As reliable as Andruw is in center field, he's maddeningly inconsistent at the plate, sometimes hitting dramatic walkoff homers, sometimes missing pitches by a good three feet.

With Air Andruw, for every thrilling moment of weightlessness, there's a time when your stomach turns over on itself.

This season's been a particularly frustrating one for Andruw. After a rough April and a truly horrific May, in which he barely topped the Mendoza line at .202, he finally put together a 10-game hitting streak and began showing signs of his old confidence. And with the Braves' fast start a long-ago memory and the Mets beginning to open some distance in the standings, it's a perfect time for Andruw to return to form.

But even as he struggled through one of the roughest stretches of his career, hitting below .200 in clutch situations like "two outs and runners in scoring position," Andruw tried to maintain the casual cool that's defined his entire career.

"If I knew [why the dives happen], I wouldn't slump," Jones said with a shrug. "I know how to hit. [Hitting for average and power will] come when it comes."

Still, calling Andruw's troubles at the plate "slumps" is like saying Bobby Cox has won a game or two in his day. Jones' funks are epic, canyon-like swoons, where he looks so uncomfortable with a bat in his hand that you wonder if he ought to try, say, swinging from the other side of the plate. And he's had these kinds of droughts from Day One. He didn't get his first hit in a Division Series until his fourth, in 1999, halting an 0-for-20 skid. And even during 2005, the most celebrated season of his career, he hit a mere .210 in September and October.

ALISON SHIRREFFS

A career .267 hitter entering the season and the 2005 Major League Player of the Year, Andruw hit .196 from May 1-June 11, dragging his season average down to .221 with 62 strikeouts in 231 at-bats.

But like a rollercoaster, every drop rolls into a rise. From the depths of his funks, Jones will bust out with spectacular runs of extra-base hits and game-winning homers. After floundering in the 2003 post-season, he batted .526 and .471 in the 2004 and 2005 playoffs, respectively. And even through his nightmarish April and May of this year, he's racked up seven game-winning RBIs, fifth best in the NL.

> "FROM THE DEPTHS OF HIS FUNKS, JONES WILL BUST OUT WITH SPECTACULAR RUNS OF EXTRA-BASE HITS AND GAME-WINNING HOMERS."

Andruw sums up the difficulty of hitting with a single word: "balance." It's a delicate thing, hitting a baseball, requiring coordination in and between both upper and lower body. During his season-opening downswing, Andruw and Terry Pendleton determined that he was way out of sync above the belt.

"I've been opening up too quickly," he said, meaning that he's turning his shoulders into the pitch before the ball arrives, weakening his potential power. "I've been concentrating on staying behind the ball, and it's paying off."

Andruw's been through this before, but with the lower half of his body. A couple of years back, Andruw followed the advice of none other than Willie Mays himself, who told Andruw that the difference between a home run that lands 20 rows up and a dribbler of a hit that barely reaches the pitcher is only a couple of inches in the batter's box. Just by widening his stance a bit, he generated enough power to smack a franchise-record 51 homers. A tiny adjustment had an enormous payoff that resulted in being named Major League Player of the Year.

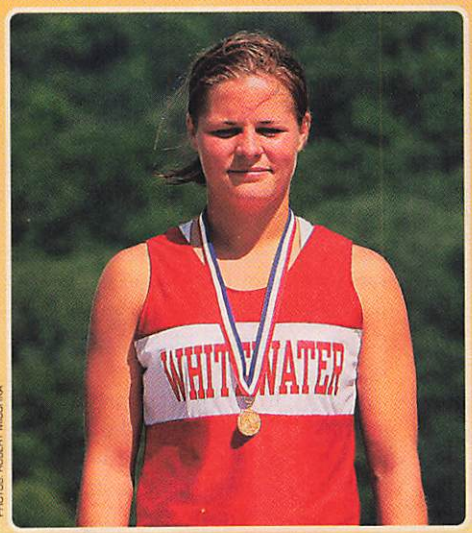
As a result, for better or worse, Andruw's grown used to these pendulum swings in performance, even if the rest of us haven't. When you debut with one of the all-time great post-season performances in history - remember, Andruw bashed homers in his first two World Series at-bats, back in 1996 at Yankee Stadium - well, you've got to know there's nowhere to go but down.

So, maybe that's why Andruw doesn't freak out and start summoning priests to exorcise the demons from his bats or anything. He keeps the same casual, toes-in-the-sand, beachfront demeanor regardless of whether he's pounding the ball halfway to Villa Rica or - gah! - striking out five times in a game, as he did May 20 against Boston.

"I try to take it one at-bat at a time," he said. "I don't want to be thinking about anything [like previous failures]. I just let the ball get there."

So, he'll ride out the funks and enjoy the highs, and we'll be right there with him. (Well... not with him. The batter's box isn't that large.) And all of us will hope that the upswing he's riding at this writing keeps rising right on through October.

IN THE BLOOD



PHOTOS: ROBERT MISCHKA

Holly Mathews, the granddaughter of legendary Braves third baseman Eddie Mathews, is a state champion pole vaulter in Wisconsin.

"EDDIE WOULD be proud!" said Bob Buege, a frequent contributor to ChopTalk and the biographer of the late, great Eddie Mathews.

Buege was speaking of Holly Mathews, granddaughter of the Hall of Fame third baseman who hit 493 of his 512 career home runs as a Brave from 1952-66.

Holly, a senior at Whitewater High School and the daughter of Dr. Ed Mathews, won the Wisconsin Division 2 girls pole vault championship June 2 by clearing 11 feet, 3 inches. She said she hoped to reach at least 11-7, the school record, but was happy to settle for 11-3 when the competition was moved indoors due to severe weather.

Holly competed in four events at the state meet and was on the fifth-place team in the 1,600 relay.

"Holly is quite an athlete," said Mark Maas, her coach at Whitewater. "The university of Wisconsin wants her to compete for their women's track and field team."

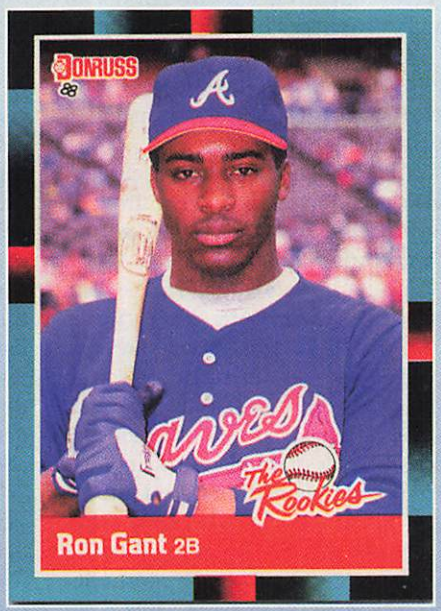
THE SON of another Braves legend, Dale Murphy, also is making athletic news. Last November, we reported on Murphy's son, Shawn, an offensive lineman at Utah State. Another of Murphy's sons, Jake, will be a senior this year at American Fork (Utah) High, where he is both a football and baseball star. A 6-5, 215-pound wide receiver, he had 30 receptions for 530 yards and eight touchdowns as a junior. He reportedly has scholarship offers from Arizona State, BYU, California, Oregon and Stanford. Jake plays shortstop but could play third base in college if he decides to play baseball or both sports.

CARD ART

ONE OF THE KEY components of the 1991 "Worst to First" Braves team was Ron Gant, though the average fan never would have guessed it when this card was issued in 1988. Gant was still trying to find a position then, as seen by the "2B" on the front of this Donruss Rookies issue (#47).

Gant would try third base, as well as second, and get sent back to the minors to learn to play the outfield before he matured and became a rare talent - a two-time 30/30 (home runs/steals) man in 1990-91.

We found this card selling online for $1 at bbobly.com and for just 12 cents at kingscomix.com. Check with your local card dealers (consult the Yellow Pages) or do an internet search to shop for this and other Braves cards for your collection.



MR. CLUTCH

THE BRAVES had first-hand knowledge of the way Edgar Renteria could wear out a pitching staff long before they acquired him from Boston before the 2006 season. He'd hit .318 lifetime against them, even with a 1-for-13 slump during his nightmarish 2005 season with the Red Sox.

So, Atlanta is enjoying having the 31-year-old native of Barranquilla, Colombia, on its side. For the second straight season, he owns the team's longest hitting streak (18 games; last year his 24-game streak was second-longest in the majors), and he's on pace to hit a career-high 23 homers (his current season-high is 16, set in 2000).

"It's the same approach I've always had," Renteria said of his seemingly

ALLISON SHERRETTS

newfound power. "That's not my game, being a power hitter, but some days you hit the ball good and it goes out."

Renteria has been especially lethal late in games.

Through June 13, he owned the highest batting average in the majors from the seventh inning on (.387) and was in the top five in homers (six) and RBIs (18) in the last three innings.

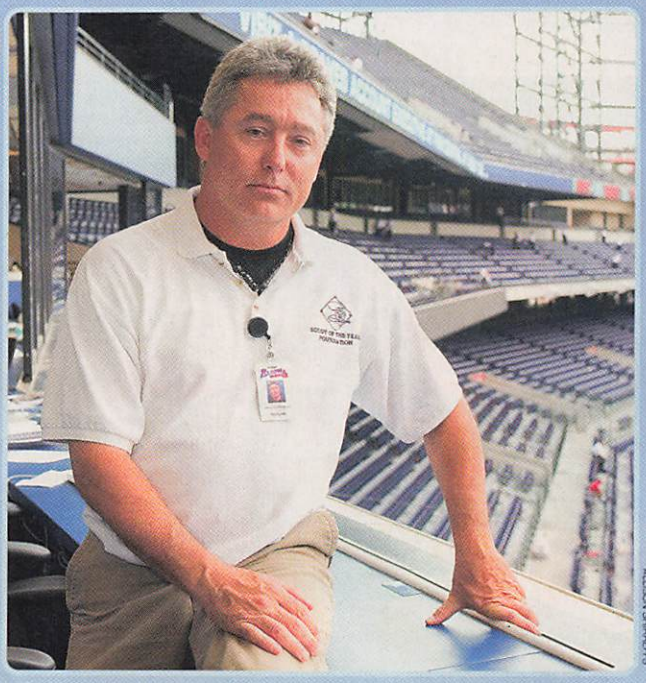
"After the first or second at-bat, you know what they're going to throw, so I'm more prepared for it," he said. "The first at-bat or second at-bat determines how you're going to be hitting late in the game."

Added Terry Pendleton, "He's not afraid to hit with two strikes, and he gives that guy on the mound an opportunity to make a mistake."

- JON COOPER

HOW DO THEY DO THAT?

GRADE A PROSPECT



ALLISON SHERRETTS

THE BRAVES' scouting department evaluates hundreds of prospects prior to the annual June draft. Different Braves scouts may watch some youngsters as many as 75 at-bats apiece. Each one fills out a scouting report. Making sense of so much information requires a uniform grading system.

The grading scale runs from 20 to 80, with 50 considered average. Scouts evaluate position players on the five "tools" - hitting, power, running, fielding and throwing. Pitching prospects have their pitches graded. One may have an 80 fastball, but only a 40 curve. Some special players earn the highest score possible. Former Braves shortstop Rafael Furcal had an 80 for both his arm and speed. Closer Mark Wohlers possessed an 80 fastball.

"We grade these tools out according to major league standards," said Roy Clark (above), the Braves' director of scouting. "Then you look at their frame, and match the tools with their frame. Then you profile them for position."

Scouts have a challenging job. They must project how a 17-year-old high school player will perform when he eventually reaches the majors, which may not happen for several years.

The scouts project a player's likely major league position. That may cause some grades to increase or decrease in importance. For example, Brian McCann's lack of speed didn't hurt him much as a catching prospect, since few big league catchers run well.

The first report usually gets filed by the area scout. Other members of the department also get involved, such as area supervisors and cross checkers. Since prospects have good and bad games, the club has as many people as possible watch them multiple times. Everyone assigns grades and fills out his own report.

At the end of May, all the information gets consolidated and reviewed for the draft.

— STEVE FALL

PLAYING PEPPER WILLIE HARRIS

ATLANTA BRAVES

Harris, who played for the 2005 World Champion White Sox, signed with the Braves in December as a minor league free agent.

INTERVIEW BY PATTY RASMUSSEN

CHOPTALK You said in an interview that you were in high school before you learned about the significance of Jackie Robinson, who was from the same small town (Cairo, Ga.) that you're from. Does it surprise you now to think that you weren't aware of what he meant to baseball, American culture, and especially to the black community?

WILLIE HARRIS I had heard the name, Jackie Robinson, growing up, but I wasn't aware of his impact until I was working on a research paper in 11th grade. I realized, "Man, this guy went through a lot and persevered with all the adversity. I thought, 'How could a man be so strong to deal with that, all the criticism?'" It didn't change me much back then, but as I've gotten older learning about life and the game of baseball, what (Robinson) went through gives me an appreciation of the shoulders I stand on.

Black History Month was more of a civil rights thing than hearing about people like Jackie Robinson. I think it's going to get better. More young African Americans are going to learn about Robinson, especially now that Major League Baseball is doing everything they can do to keep his lessons alive. (Commissioner) Bud Selig is doing his part, and it's up to the African American players to get out in the community and promote it, the game and what Robinson did. At the same time, kids are going to play what they want to play, whether it's baseball, football or basketball. Some kids prefer contact sports better than baseball.

CT What were you like when you were a kid?

HARRIS I was a rascal. All I wanted to do was play some kind of sport - football, baseball, tag football in the street, hitting a tennis ball with a broomstick, breaking stuff around the house! I was just a little kid getting into a lot of things. I was curious. I wanted to learn about things.

CT Did you like school?

HARRIS I loved school. It was a must in my house. You couldn't come home with any bad grades, so you might as well learn to like school. I was a big-time math student.

CT How far did you go in math?

HARRIS I took Algebra II in eighth grade, then moved on to trigonometry, pre-calculus, and calculus in high school. It was pretty tough, but I managed it.

CT Do you ever think about what you would have done if you weren't playing baseball?

HARRIS I think about it all the time. I think I would have played football. I don't know if I would have made it to the pros, but I would definitely have gone to college to play. I do wonder what kind of football player I could have been.

CT What if you hadn't played sports for a living?

HARRIS Maybe I would have been involved in coaching. I can't imagine not being involved in sports in some way.

CT What's your favorite football team to watch?

HARRIS Florida State University. (He was recruited for football by FSU.) I don't really watch the pros. I think college football is more interesting to watch because those college kids are so much more intense. If I have the choice between a pro or college game, I'll choose a college game. I think it's more exciting.

CT What was Ozzie Guillen like as a manager?

HARRIS He was probably a lot like he was a player. I've heard he was very talkative as a player, and he was definitely like that as a manager. That's just Ozzie. I had a good time playing for him. He kept the clubhouse calm, relaxed and full of jokes. It was fun being there (White Sox 2002-05).

CT Since you've played in both American and National Leagues, you've played in a lot of ballparks. Which are your favorites?

HARRIS I like Seattle (Safeco Field). It's one of my favorite places to play, the stadium and everything. And here, Turner Field, and I'm not saying this because I'm here, but I think we have great fans. I hear that the St. Louis fans are great, too, but I've never been there.

> "I OWN... A COUPLE HUNDRED ACRES - NOT AS MUCH AS I WANT. I'M STILL WORKING ON THAT."

CT Who's your best friend in the game?

HARRIS Tim Raines Jr. (outfielder with the Round Rock Express, Houston Astros Triple-A affiliate). We've known each other since 1999. We came up in the minor leagues together, and he's been my best friend ever since.

CT You still live in Cairo in the off-season. It's not a big city, so do you have the swankiest house in town?

HARRIS (Laughs) I have one of them.

CT Do you own a lot of property in the area?

HARRIS I own a good bit, a couple hundred acres - not as much as I want. I'm still working on that.

CT Did you have your house built for you?

HARRIS No, I bought it from a guy I know who owns a grocery store in Cairo. It was already a pretty nice house, but I added some stuff to it. I have an indoor batting cage. That's the biggest thing I added for myself, because that's all I do. In the off-season, I work out in the cage two or three times a day. When I get bored, I go hit or fish.

CT Do you own a lake?

HARRIS Not yet. I'm working on it!

CT You mentioned that your mom, Geraldine Harris, was pretty influential in your life. What did she do for a living?

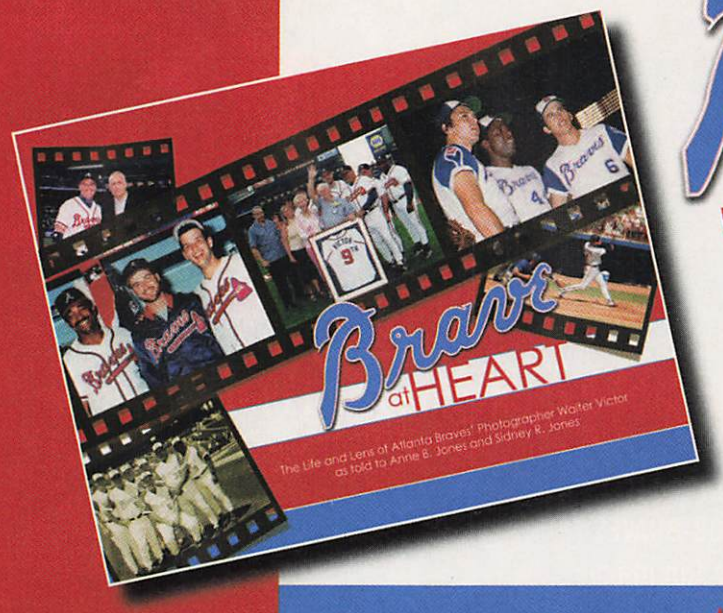
ATLANTA BRAVES

At press time, Harris led all major leaguers (minimum 80 at-bats) with a .407 batting average against right-handed pitchers.

HARRIS She was a surgical technician, so who knows what she saw in the course of her day. She was supportive of whatever I wanted to do and allowed me to do whatever I wanted to do once I got out of high school. It was understood that I was going to school - college (Kennesaw State). That's one of the reasons I didn't sign out of high school. She was very strict and didn't put up with too much nonsense. I think it helped me growing up and when I left home, going to college and living on my own. The discipline paid off and helped me to keep from going wild.

CT Is your 12-year-old daughter, Arianna, a sports fan?

HARRIS She's more of a basketball player. I don't know why. She likes basketball and plays fast-pitch softball. She's very active, and I think she'll be into a lot of stuff. I try to keep her occupied with a lot of things to do. When I'm away, during the season, she lives with my mother, and I live with my brother in Atlanta. But she lives with me when the season ends.



Brave at HEART

Walter Victor's Photograph Album of the Atlanta Braves

For forty years Walter Victor served as the official photographer for the Atlanta Braves. Now *Brave at Heart: The Life and Lens of Walter Victor* captures four decades of Braves highlights and tells the story of the extraordinary man behind the camera. Hardcover. Only $24.95.

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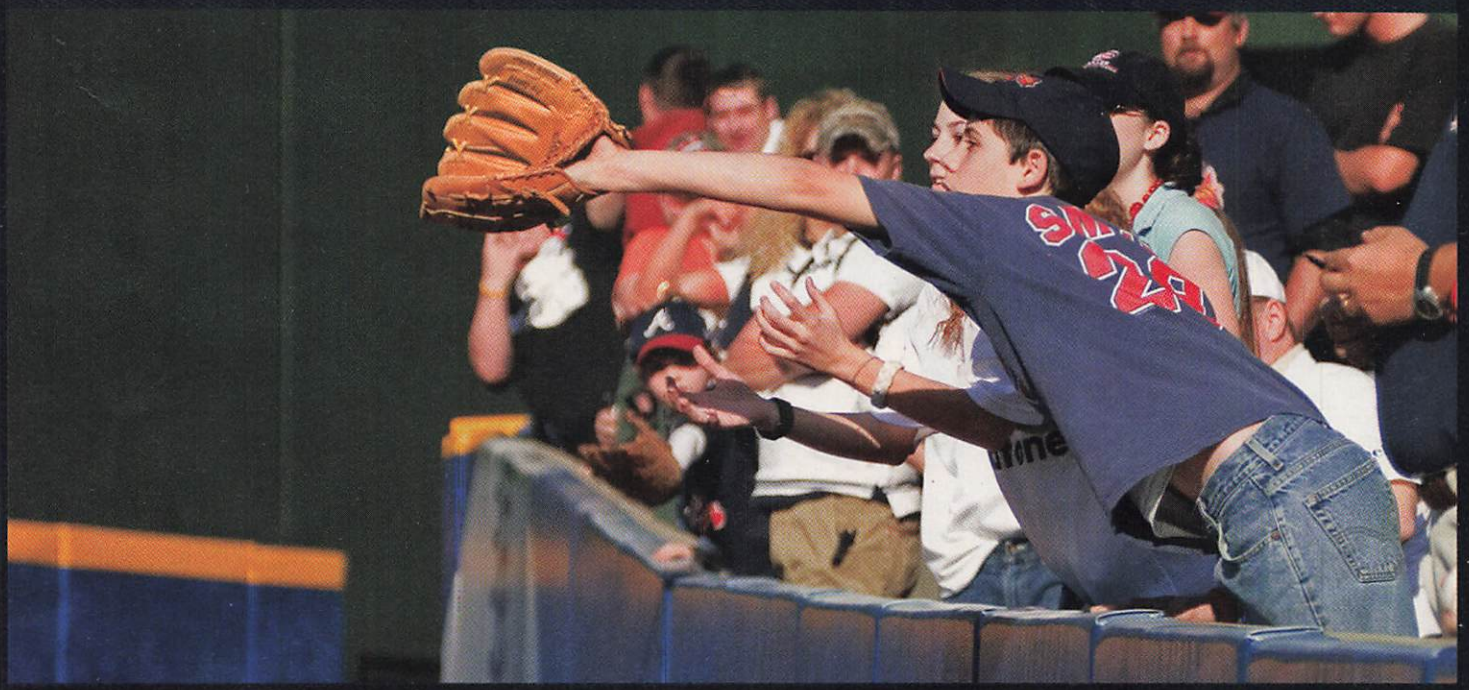

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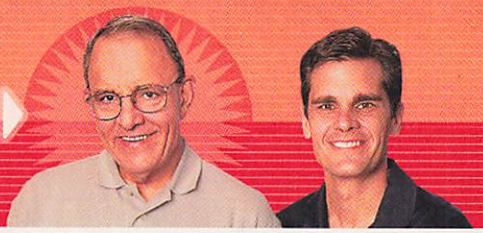
SKIP'S CARAY CORNER



ON THE HAMMER, STEALTH BOMBERS AND MORE

NOBODY ASKED ME, BUT...

Why all the uproar about Henry Aaron not attending the game when Barry Bonds breaks his all-time home run record? Henry is a private citizen in his 70s. It's nobody's business but his. If he doesn't want to travel around to see his record broken, who can blame him? The commissioner should be there, because it's his job. But it's not Henry Aaron's, so leave him alone.

NOBODY ASKED ME, BUT...

To the fans who blog and rant about the Braves making a trade for a starting pitcher... It ain't that easy!

John Schuerholz tries every day to improve his team, but virtually everyone else is looking for pitching, too, and the price tag on reliable starting pitchers is exorbitant.

If John can do a deal, he will, but don't expect miracles.

NOBODY ASKED ME, BUT...

I don't understand baseball's horror at Jason Giambi admitting that he used steroids and his further statements that owners and players should admit to the problem and deal with it.

It seems to me he should be applauded for coming clean, taking responsibility for his actions, and bringing forth a convincing and reasonable plan to solve the problem.

Instead, they threaten to cancel his contract and suspend him.

Honesty the best policy? Apparently not.

NOBODY ASKED ME, BUT...

It's interesting that the Cubs and Red Sox sell out virtually every game. The Red Sox have been very good, and the Cubs have been very bad, but they do have two things in common. They play in historic, old ballparks, and all they give you is baseball.

No dance contest, no cheerleaders, no kiss cam, etc.

Interesting...

NOBODY ASKED ME, BUT...

Baseball should seriously consider doing away with Sunday night network baseball. Fans in cities such as Atlanta, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Kansas City and others come from hundreds of miles away to see the games. When a game is moved from a 1:05 start to an 8:10 start on Sunday, many of the out-of-town people often have to waste tickets because of school and work the next day.

The Braves do a good job of working with such fans, but it still leaves a bad taste. And all teams aren't as cooperative with fans in this situation as our team is.

Why not Saturday night instead of Sunday night?

EDITOR'S NOTE

Skip Caray and Chip Caray alternate months in this space, so watch for Chip in August. Skip will be back here in September.

NOBODY ASKED ME, BUT...

I really like former Brave Gary Sheffield (2002-03), but he should not have used racial stereotyping to make a point. All Afro-Americans aren't standup guys, and neither are all Caucasian or all Hispanics.

In an interview in GQ magazine, Sheffield said the main reason there are so many Latino players in the major leagues, and so few African-Americans, is that teams believe Hispanics are easier to control.

"Where I'm from, you can't control us," Sheffield said in the interview. "... These are the things my race demands. So, if you're equally good as this Latin player, guess who's going to get sent home? I know a lot of players that are home now can outplay a lot of these guys."

Come on Gary, you know better than that...

NOBODY ASKED ME, BUT...

The folks who run the Minnesota Twins are asking for trouble when they begin building a 40,000-seat, open-air ballpark. You think Cleveland and Chicago have cold spring weather! Minnesota beats them all.

Also, during the summer in the Land of 10,000 Lakes, they have mosquitoes the size of Stealth Bombers, which isn't going to be pleasant either for Twins fans sitting in the open.

I heard they couldn't get enough money from the Minnesota legislature to get a roof. But it'll cost them millions of dollars in early season ticket sales over the upcoming year.

KYB KNOW YOUR BRAVES

CHRIS WOODWARD #5

2006 STATISTICS * WITH METS

AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
.216	83	222	25	48	10	1	3	25	23	55	5

BASICS

FULL NAME	CHRIS MICHAEL WOODWARD
POSITION	Infielder
VITALS	Bats/Throws ... Right/Right Height ... 6-0 Weight ... 190 Age ... 31
BORN	June 27, 1976 Covina, Calif.
CONTRACT ACQUIRED	Signed through 2007 Signed as free agent Dec. 22, 2006
PERSONAL	Married (Erin); Daughter (Sophie).

CAREER

JACK-OF-ALL-TRADES
Played six positions – first base, second base, third base, shortstop, left field and right field – for Mets in 2006.

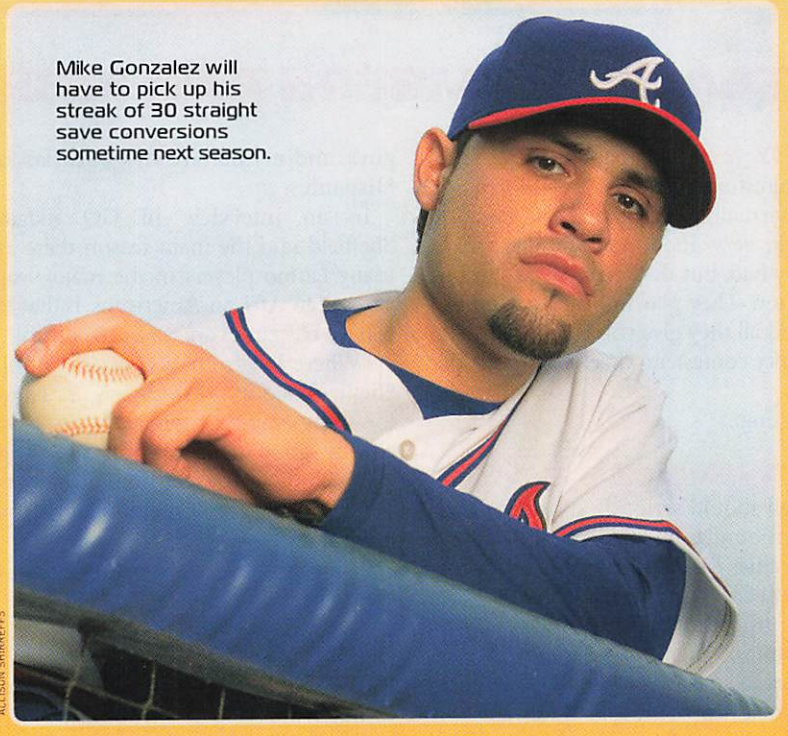
SURPRISE!
Hit first career pinch-hit home run – also first career walkoff homer – to beat San Diego, 3-1, last July 19.

THREESOME
Became 15th shortstop in big league history to hit three home runs in a game on Aug. 7, 2002, playing for Toronto vs. Seattle.

LATE BLOOMER
Originally selected in 54th round of 1994 draft by Toronto out of Mt. San Antonio College (Calif.)

PHOTO

ALLISON SHIRREFFS



Mike Gonzalez will have to pick up his streak of 30 straight save conversions sometime next season.

ALLISON SHIRREFFS

GONZO'S GONE

THE REBUILT BULLPEN suffered a serious setback when lefty setup man **Mike Gonzalez** underwent ligament reconstruction surgery on his elbow May 17. Recovery from the procedure usually takes 12 months for pitchers.

The Braves acquired Gonzalez from Pittsburgh (along with minor league infielder **Brent Lillibridge**) in the off-season in exchange for **Adam LaRoche** (and minor league outfielder **Jamie Romak**).

The 29-year-old Gonzalez had a 1.59 ERA, best on the team, in 18 appearances. Though used mainly in a setup role, he had two saves in two chances, giving him a streak of 30 consecutive save conversions dating to Aug. 16, 2004.

When Gonzalez was disabled May 16, **Macay McBride** was called up from Richmond to take his spot on the roster.

NOT SO CHIPPER

Off to one of the best starts of his career, **Chipper Jones** literally ran into trouble May 11 when going from second base to third against Pittsburgh at PNC Park. With Pirates third baseman **Jose Bautista** fielding a grounder right in front of him, Chipper vaulted over Bautista, avoiding a tag and a collision. However, he used his hands to brace his landing and injured both of them. He sustained deep bruises on his palms, near the base of his thumbs.

A CT scan revealed no bone break or ligament tear, though there was internal bleeding. At one point, he wore splints on both hands, and he also had several cortisone shots.

Jones sat out the next four games, then played a week in pain, only to finally go on the disabled list June 1, retroactive to May 24. He came off the DL June 13 and served as the designated hitter during a stretch against American League teams.

It was Chipper's fourth trip to the DL since the start of the 2006 season. **Yunel Escobar** was called up from Richmond to replace him on the roster.

PLATOON NEWS

John Smoltz became the 109th pitcher to win 200 career games when he beat **Tom Glavine** and the Mets, 2-1, May 24 at Turner Field. Smoltz, who turned 40 years old May 15, worked seven shutout innings to become the first man to win 200 games and save 150. The only other pitcher with 150 wins and 150 saves is Hall of Famer **Dennis Eckersley**, who had 197 wins and 390 saves.

Rafael Soriano pitched a scoreless eighth inning, and **Bob Wickman** gave up a run in the ninth before registering the save. The fans that stayed around for the end of the game gave Smoltz a rousing ovation.

Smoltz, however, had to leave his next start (May 29) in the fourth inning after throwing just 58 pitches. He said he "tweaked" his shoulder. He was given a little extra rest before his next start (June 5), then didn't pitch again until June 16 at Cleveland. He also had to leave his May 14 start in the seventh inning when he dislocated his right little finger tagging Washington's **Austin Kearns** between third and home.

PLATOON NEWS

Rookie catcher **Jarrod Saltalamacchia** made his debut at first base June 3 in the seventh inning against the Cubs. It was the first time he'd played the position since high school. But **Bobby Cox** liked what he saw of the switch-hitter's production at the plate so much that he began platooning him at first base with **Scott Thorman**. Saltalamacchia made his first start at first base June 14 at Minnesota, and was back there the following night, igniting a game-winning rally in the ninth inning with a lead-off double off the wall at Cleveland.

REDMAN, WILSON CUT

Craig Wilson, signed as a free agent in the off-season, and **Mark Redman**, signed as a free agent in spring training when **Mike Hampton** was injured, were released within five days of each other.

Wilson, used mainly at first base, hit just .172 in 24 games. He signed a minor league contract with the White Sox. Redman was 0-4 with an 11.63 ERA in six games (five starts).

Brayan Pena was activated from the disabled list when Wilson was released (May 17). However, Pena was optioned to Richmond May 18. **Joey Devine** was called up from Double-A Mississippi when Redman was released (May 22).

In other transactions, **Anthony Lerew** (elbow) was put on the DL May 20, and **Martin Prado** was called up from Richmond. Devine was sent back to Mississippi May 25 so that **Buddy Carlyle** could be brought up from Richmond to start.

On June 3, **Lance Cormier** was activated form the DL, and Prado was returned to Richmond.

In his second start, Carlyle held the Marlins to one hit in seven innings (June 5, his first win in the majors since 1999 with the Padres) but was sent back to Richmond immediately so that **Blaine Boyer** could be called up from Triple A to provide bullpen insurance.

Carlyle was called back June 10 to make another start, and Cormier was placed on the DL with a tired arm.

TARGET PRACTICE

The Braves and Cubs had a bench-clearing incident June 10 when Chicago's **Ted Lilly** hit **Edgar Renteria** with a pitch in the first inning at Turner Field. The ball was headed at Renteria's chin, and he deflected it with his hand, suffering a contusion that caused him to come out of the game in the fourth.

Lilly was ejected for hitting Renteria, because the previous night, **Tim Hudson** hit **Alfonso Soriano** in the arm with the first pitch of the game, and a warning was issued by the umpires - meaning retaliation meant immediate ejection. Soriano hit three home runs against the Braves June 8.

SHORT HOPS

- **Andruw Jones** hit his 350th career home run May 28 at Milwaukee.
- **Kyle Davies** had three hits in an 8-5 win over the Cubs June 1, becoming the first Braves pitcher since **Terry Mulholland** in 2000 to have three hits in a game.
- **Bobby Cox** was ejected for the 130th time in his career May 26, leaving him one shy of **John McGraw** for first place on the all-time list.

JOHN
SCHUERHOLZ
GENERAL MANAGER

I STILL BELIEVE ANDRUW WILL DO A LOT OF DAMAGE

THE ENTIRE PROCESS OF THE SALE OF THE TEAM came to its anticipated end when Time Warner and Liberty Media reached an agreement on the asset exchange. As we said all along and continue to say, there will be no discernable difference in how this franchise is operated under Liberty than it was under Time Warner.

We will be able to make management decisions appropriate for the organization that are focused on the same goal as always - and that is to field a championship-caliber team, year after year.

We're in sort of a head-scratching circumstance with out pitching. In the spring, we had Mike Hampton as our third starter and Mike Gonzalez as a key component in our bullpen. Now we find ourselves without those guys, and our starting pitching is unsettled as a result.

I said over the winter that our division would be a dogfight, with teams knocking off each other. I certainly didn't expect we could go 3-5 in our last eight games and pick up a game in the standings.

But whether it's the Mets or Phillies or Marlins, there's a chance for any club to run off a good streak in this division because the others are knocking off each other. There will be that kind of ebb and flow in the standings for the rest of year.

We all have issues, and we all have strengths. It's going to keep the race very interesting.

We have two options to investigate to improve our pitching - either making a trade or promoting from the farm system.

We are engaged in conversations with other clubs, and we continue to monitor the development of our minor leaguers to see if we can find a starting pitcher that makes us stronger.

> "WE'RE EXAMINING ALL OPTIONS ABOUT HOW TO KEEP THOSE TWO DYNAMIC PLAYERS IN THE LINEUP AT THE SAME TIME."

We're going to keep looking. Of course, everybody else in contention is doing the same thing. There's a real premium on starting pitching.

Other teams know they can't "steal" anyone from us, but it would be silly for them not to have vibrant interest in talented, young players such as Jarrod Saltalamacchia and Yunel Escobar. They'd also be silly to think we don't have the same level of interest in those guys.

We're obviously aware that we have two top young catchers - Brian McCann, signed to a long-term contract, and Salty, who is an emerging talent.

We're in no hurry to change that. There are a lot of organizations that lust after either one. So do we. We don't have an interest in diminishing our depth at that key position. We'll just take that situation we're blessed with day by day and see where it goes.

Salty has worked at first base and played there an inning or two at Chicago. He played first base and third base in high school, so he has infield experience to some degree. We're examining all options about how to keep those two dynamic players in the lineup at the same time.

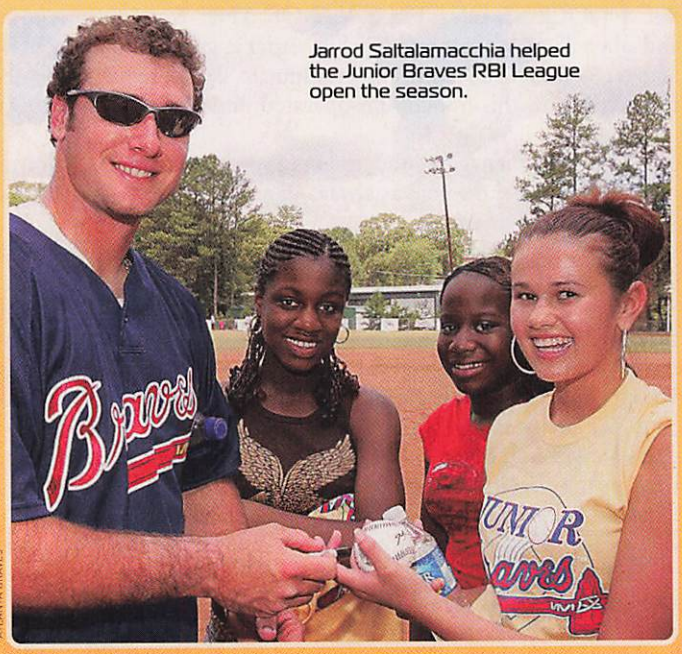
I think Chipper will be okay, but he'll be sore for a long time. He'll be able to perform and be productive, though.

Chipper is a cornerstone player, and having him in the lineup makes us better and makes everyone in the lineup better.

As far as Andruw goes, one of the things I always rely on is that it is reasonable and fair that a player, at the end of the year, will reach his career average level of production in key categories. That's what I've always banked on when making decisions and adjustments to the roster.

While it's clear Andruw is struggling, our feeling is that at the end of the year, he'll still be the Andruw we've always known. That means he'll do a lot of damage in the second half.

A SALTY OPENING



Jarrod Saltalamacchia helped the Junior Braves RBI League open the season.

ATLANTA BRAVES

JARROD SALTALAMACCHIA participated in Junior Braves Day and the season opening ceremony of the Junior Braves RBI Baseball League June 7 at the Brookhaven Boy & Girls Club. Saltalamacchia joined more than 500 Junior Braves participants from 22 Metro Atlanta Boys & Girls Clubs for the festivities.

Saltalamacchia discussed the four points of Junior Braves Baseball – confidence, integrity, teamwork and leadership - then took part in a home run derby with some of the Junior Braves.

This is the third year that the Braves and Delta Air Lines are teaming to offer more than 900 members of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Atlanta the opportunity to play in the Junior Braves RBI Baseball League. The league offers youth in disadvantaged areas where recreation programs are most needed the opportunity to play in a free summer baseball league that runs from June-August. The league is open to youth ages 10-18. Under the umbrella of MLB's Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (RBI), the Junior Braves RBI League is an outreach program designed to increase minority youth participation and interest in baseball, encourage academic participation and achievement, develop self-esteem, and teach the value of teamwork.

LADIES' DAY!

Women have the opportunity to participate in a unique baseball experience July 14 at Turner Field when the Braves hold their annual Baseball 101 Clinic. The event is presented by Publix, and proceeds benefit the Atlanta Braves Foundation and the Atlanta 2-Day Walk for Breast Cancer. Women who want to learn more about baseball - and even practice or become familiar with baseball skills - can register for Baseball 101 at Braves.com/community by June 29.

Women are taught batting, pitching and fielding skills by Braves players and coaches. Following the on-field portion of the clinic, "guest professors" will host a panel discussion on topics such as scouting, player development, the nuances of baseball, nutrition and fitness.

The clinic will end with a behind-the-scenes tour of Turner Field. Baseball 101 is $75. The price also includes lunch, a Baseball 101 t-shirt, a Braves gift bag with an autographed item, and two tickets to that evening's 7:05 game against the Pittsburgh Pirates.

SHIRTS FOR CHARITY

Braves players and **Bobby Cox** took the jerseys off their backs on June 9 to raise more than $16,000 for the Atlanta Braves Foundation and Piedmont Hospital Transplant Services. Now in its seventh year, the popular Jerseys Off Our Backs fundraiser gives fans the chance to purchase scratch-off raffle tickets and win autographed player-worn jerseys after the game.

"THE SPAHNIE"

Minnesota Twins ace **Johan Santana** accepted the trophy for the 2006 **Warren Spahn** Award on May 23. Santana was unable to attend the presentation of the award earlier this year in Oklahoma, so the Oklahoma Sports Museum, which sponsors the award, arranged for a ceremony at Rangers Ballpark in Arlington.

Joined by many of his teammates, Santana accepted the trophy and immediately thanked his supporting cast.

The Warren Spahn Award is presented to the best left-handed pitcher in the majors - based on a combination of wins, strikeouts and ERA. It is named after the late Warren Spahn, the winningest left-hander in history with 363 victories - 356 with the Braves.

It was the second time Santana received the award. He also won it in 2004, and he won the AL Cy Young both those seasons.

Randy Johnson won the first four Spahn Awards, beginning in 1999. **Andy Pettitte** won in 2003, and **Dontrelle Willis** won in 2005.

ARMED FORCES DAY

The Braves honored all branches of the United States military on Armed Forces Day, May 26, at Turner Field. Participants included soldiers from Georgia serving in Iraq, volunteers from Third Army, Fort MacPherson, Fort Gillem, Dobbins Air Force Base, and U.S. Coast Guard, and local Vietnam veterans.

Pre-Game ceremonies featured the presentation of an American Flag the size of the outfield by 60 soldiers from the four branches of United States military. There was a flyover by four AH 64 Apache

Helicopters at the conclusion of the National Anthem, and local Vietnam veterans lined the bases as they are saluted in commemoration of the Vietnam Memorial Fund's 25th anniversary.

Throughout the game, Georgia soldiers serving in Iraq were featured on the BravesVision board as they send messages back home to their loved ones.

The American Flag flying over center field on Armed Forces Day also was flown over Iraq on June 15, 2006, during support of combat operations, symbolizing the United States of America.

BALLS & STRIKES

- Tickets to the Aug. 17 Braves Hall of Fame luncheon, at which **David Justice** will be inducted, are $100 apiece. For information, call (404) 614-2310. FAX ticket orders with credit card information to (404) 614-1423 or mail checks to: Braves Museum & Hall of Fame, 755 Hank Aaron Dr., Atlanta, Ga. 30315. A silent auction at 10:45 a.m. precedes the luncheon that starts at 11:30 a.m. The induction ceremony is at 12:45 p.m.

- **Chipper Jones** became the first active major leaguer inducted into the Class A South Atlantic League Hall of Fame June 19 during the league's All-Star Game luncheon in Rome, Ga. Chipper's only season in the league was 1991 when he hit .326 with 15 homers, 98 RBIs and 104 runs in 136 games at Macon.

- Braves Power Lunches are scheduled Aug. 3, Aug. 31 and Sept. 21 at ESPN Zone. The lunches run from noon to 1 p.m. Doors open at 11 a.m. Tickets are $35. Fans can purchase tickets by calling ESPN Zone at (404) 682-3776, ext. 226. Paid admission entitles each guest to lunch, a gift pack with an autographed item from one of the Power Lunch participants, and the opportunity to win door prizes.

- The Braves named **Greg Heller** vice president and general counsel. He was the assistant team counsel for the Braves since 2000, in addition to serving as senior counsel for Turner Sports and TBS. Heller is responsible for all legal aspects of the Braves organization..

SMOLTZ, HUDSON, EDGAR PLAYING LIKE ALL-STARS

WE'VE HAD A SPATE OF INJURIES. Our starting rotation took a hit with the loss of Mike Hampton. Lance Cormier pitched great in spring training, but then got hurt and has not been effective at this writing. You don't expect a guy to pitch like that (7 home runs in 7 2/3 innings), but at the same time, it doesn't surprise you because it can take awhile to get going.

Chipper Jones has been out a lot because of the injury to his palms and thumbs. That's an injury that will bother him all year. The only way it's really going to get better is for him to rest it for a significant amount of time, and that means the offseason.

Brian McCann has injured his finger twice this year, and he rolled his ankle, the same ankle he hurt last year. He's done fine, but we've played Jarrod Saltalamacchia in his place to give Mac time to rest. Salty's done great.

We didn't win much at home for a while, and it made it hard to think of any "up sides" to the season. There isn't any reason or excuse for a better road record versus home. Everyone has to play the schedule they're given, and has to play in the same ballparks. It all evens out. We have to figure out a way to win at home like we've done on the road.

We're really pleased with the way some of our young players like Kelly Johnson and Willie Harris have performed.

Tyler Yates has pitched awfully well. He throws hard and has a good slider and he's very dependable. Peter Moylan is another guy who's coming into his own. Martin Prado came up and played well, and Yunel Escobar came up to fill in at third and has been outstanding. We got a terrific seven-inning, one-hit pitching performance out of Buddy Carlyle against the Marlins, and those are all good things.

> "WE HAVE TO FIGURE OUT A WAY TO WIN AT HOME LIKE WE'VE DONE ON THE ROAD."

Then there are the guys in the minor leagues knocking at the door again, like they were in 2005.

There are pitchers and position players that are highly thought of - Brandon Jones an outfielder playing in Mississippi, Joey Devine (Mississippi) is striking out about two out of every three batters. Will Startup, a left-handed reliever, is mowing everybody down in Triple A. Right-handed pitcher Manny Acosta is doing extremely well in Richmond. We're really encouraged by what we see from our young players.

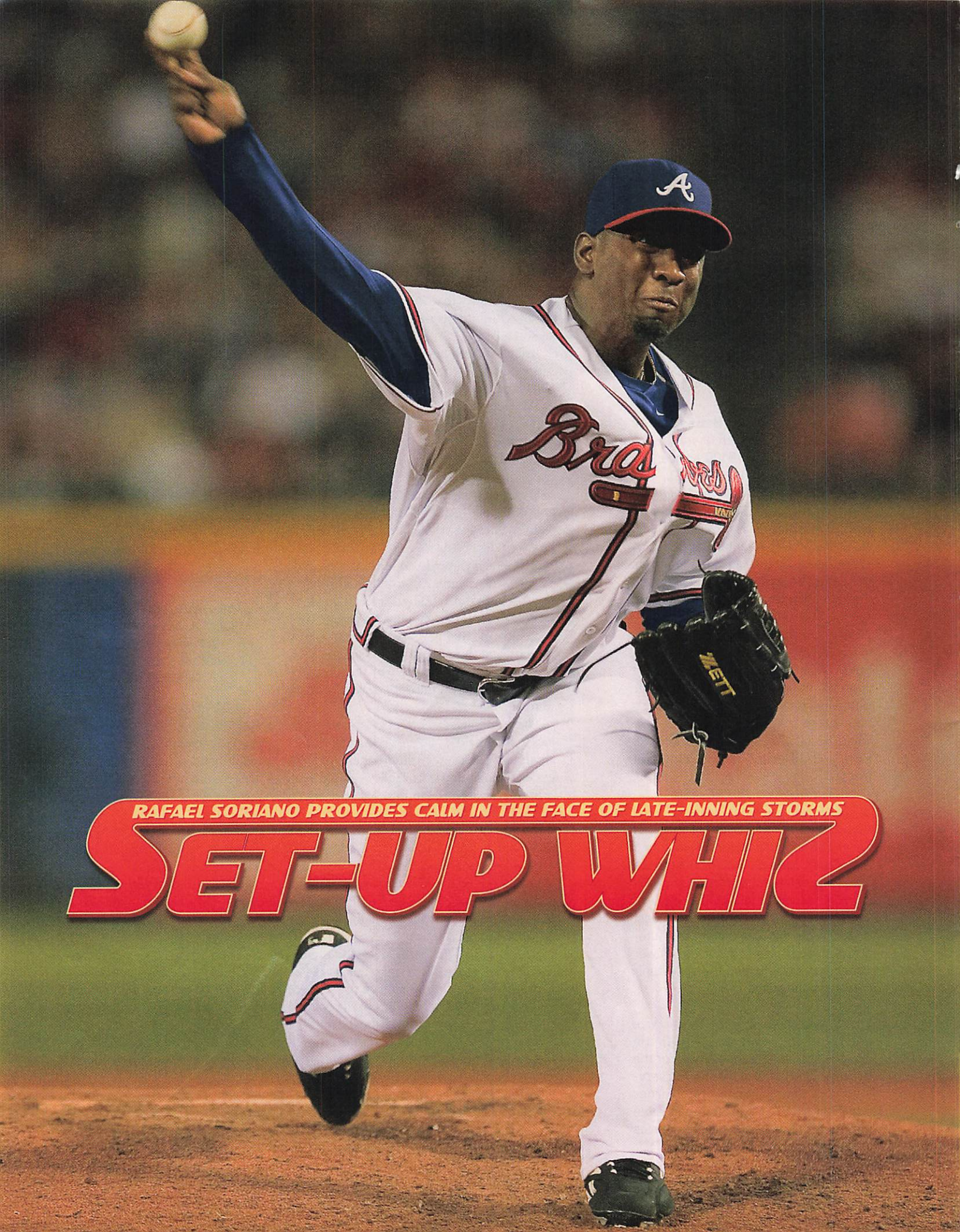
We finished June by playing more interleague games - Minnesota, Boston, Cleveland and Detroit. We saw Boston before (May 18-20), but it's been a while since we played against those other teams.

I like going to the American League ballparks, especially those we haven't seen in a while. We have to get used to their park, but that's an easy transition. The only thing different is that they have the designated hitter, and when they come here, National League rules apply.

These days, all the parks are pretty evenly matched and rarely favor the home team. Years ago in St. Louis, the fences were way back and they played on Astroturf, so the club was made up of speed guys. You'd go in there with some artillery and couldn't hit it out of the ballpark, and they'd be bunting and hitting choppers, and it was a big advantage for them.

One of the few places that still gives their team a huge advantage is the Metrodome in Minneaoplis. The ceiling doesn't provide a good background to spot balls, and the Astroturf is really springy.

I think Tim Hudson and John Smoltz are definite considerations to make the All-Star team. Edgar Renteria has played All-Star baseball.



RAFAEL SORIANO PROVIDES CALM IN THE FACE OF LATE-INNING STORMS

SET-UP WHIZ

BY STEVE FALL

THE BRAVES hold a 2-0 lead on the Mets entering the eighth inning May 24, and New York has the heart of the order due up. Bobby Cox turns to his bullpen to preserve the victory. Atlanta needs a win to keep the division race tight, and the large Turner Field crowd has come to life. Pressure is everywhere, especially with John Smoltz's 200th career victory at stake.

Rafael Soriano strolls to the mound and lobs in his first several warmups. If he feels the pressure, there's no way to tell from his face or actions. By the time he makes his final warmup, the ball's exploding into the catcher's mitt.
It's now time for business.

The first-year Brave retires Endy Chavez on a grounder, and after walking Carlos Beltran, strikes out dangerous David Wright looking, and retires Paul Lo Duca on a flyball. Without incident, he hands over the game to Bob Wickman, who records the save.

Soriano grew up in Boca Chica, a coastal Dominican Republic town he describes with the words "todo es tranquilo", meaning "all is calm" in Spanish. While he brings that same relaxed attitude to the mound with him, he combines it with an intense focus.

Despite coming to a new team, a new league, and a new city, nothing seems to have fazed him. When Wickman went on the disabled list for the first two weeks in May, Soriano stepped right in and closed with precision. Despite the added scrutiny and responsibility surrounding that role, Soriano converted five straight save opportunities.

"Right now, I feel good. Everything is going well," said the 27-year-old righthander. "Everything is going as I expected it to be. And I expect it to continue that way."

If Soriano does continue to pitch in the same manner as he did in his first two-plus months as a Brave, National League batters have some rough at-bats ahead of them. Using a fastball that reaches 96-to-98 miles per hour and a nasty slider, Soriano surrendered just nine hits in his first 24 innings. During May, he allowed only three baserunners to reach all month. From May 4 through May 28 – a stretch covering nine appearances and 9 2/3innings – he held the opposition hitless. Call it a "no-hitter" - one inning at a time!

No matter how much success he has, Soriano won't pump his fist or jump around when he pitches. There's no wasted motion or emotion. It's all about his filthy stuff, concentration, and getting the batter out.

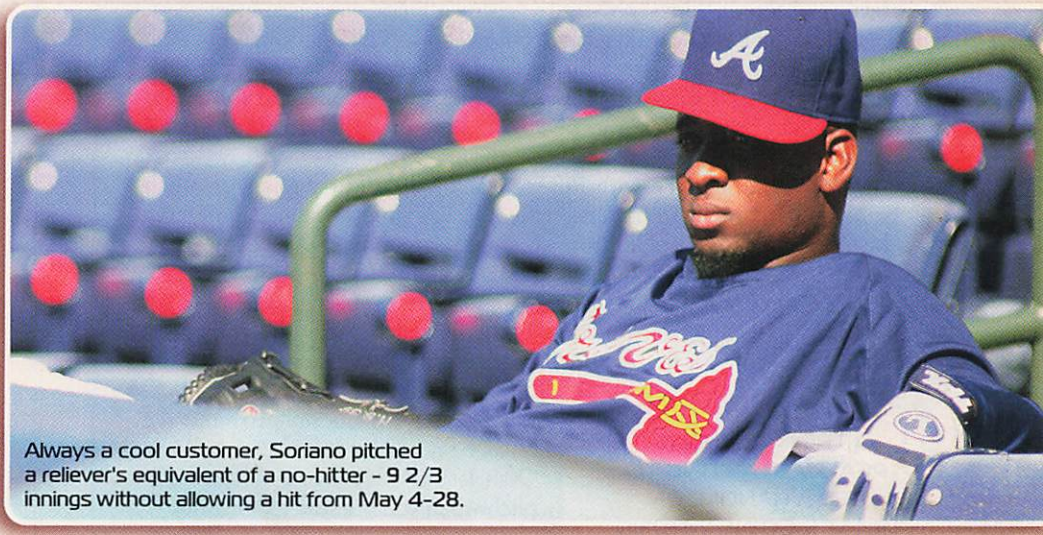
Nothing seems to rattle Soriano. Faced with tough challenges from a young age forward, he has always met them head on. He carries that same approach to the mound.

For someone ideally suited for a setup role, it took a long time for Soriano to land there. The path he traveled to become a Braves reliever took him all over the map and the baseball diamond.

Born in San Jose, Dominican Republic, Soriano moved to Boca Chica at a young age. He began playing baseball at age eight. Unlike many other Dominican youngsters, he says he never dreamed of playing in the major leagues.

"I never thought about that. I always just thought about playing ball," said Soriano. "Only God knows about one's luck. But I always tried to distinguish myself when I played, and develop the potential I had."

While growing up, Soriano watched Braves telecasts on TBS.



Always a cool customer, Soriano pitched a reliever's equivalent of a no-hitter - 9 2/3 innings without allowing a hit from May 4-28.

ALLISON SHIRREFFS

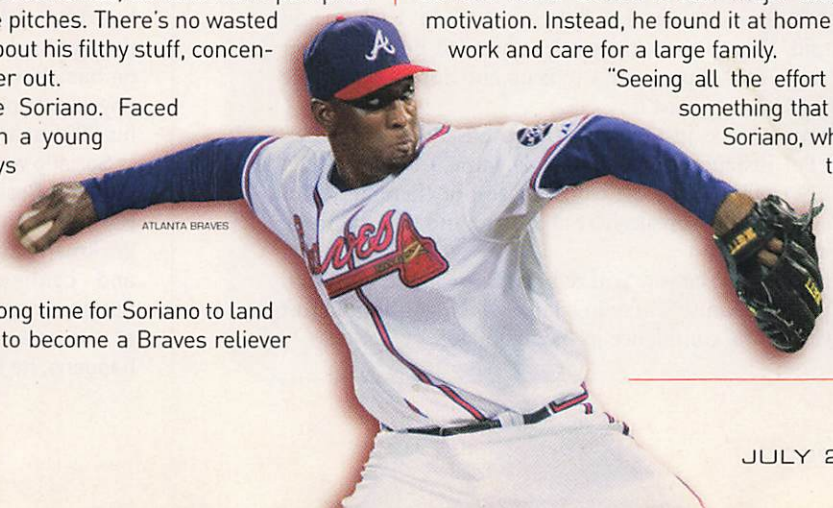
He wasn't a big fan of the team – or any particular team – but liked watching one pitcher in particular.

"I always liked John Smoltz. The way he pitched and everything," said the 6-1, 220-pound Soriano, who is divorced with five children. "I liked the uniform number that he wore. I've always been a fan of him. Maybe he knows it. Maybe he doesn't."

Soriano explained that he gets puzzled expressions when he answers the question about his favorite pitcher. People expect him to mention fellow Dominican Pedro Martinez or another Hispanic pitcher, rather than an American like Smoltz that he had never met until this season. Then again, most of the reliever's responses show that he doesn't fit any particular mold.

While he enjoyed watching baseball games on television, Soriano never looked to star major leaguers for inspiration or motivation. Instead, he found it at home by watching his mother work and care for a large family.

"Seeing all the effort that she put forth was something that really inspired me," said Soriano, who has four brothers and three sisters. "I wanted to try to get her out of where she was because I could see that she wasn't doing well at that time. Then my oldest daughter was



ATLANTA BRAVES

ATLANTA BRAVES

CONFIDENCE IS CRITICAL TO CONSISTENT SUCCESS

OVERALL, I WOULD SAY things are on the right track for me. The differences might seem minor to some people, but my delivery is a little sounder and I'm a little more consistent with it. And I've said all along, confidence is a huge factor - just going out there and knowing you're in control, making my pitches.

Physically, I feel a lot better than I have in the past. I feel stronger. I've been working out with a regular conditioning program all year. I've been staying on top of things, physically, getting athletic massages. I feel great. There's normal soreness after starts, but my body is rebounding really well.

My bullpen sessions are a lot better than they were last year. They're short and sweet. I throw my bullpen sessions the second and third days after I pitch. I go in there right before batting practice, usually around 4 o'clock for a night game.

I head to the bullpen with Roger (McDowell) and try to get as much game preparation as I can. Once I feel loose, I almost pretend I'm taking the mound for a game. I'll throw my eight warmup pitches, like I normally would in a game, and someone stands in as a hitter.

I'll face three or four hitters of the team I'll be facing next. I go game speed.

It's easy in the bullpen, if there's a borderline pitch, to say, "Okay that was a strike. The count is 0 balls, 1 strike." It's easy to pitch when you're getting all the borderline strikes. If there's a borderline pitch (in the bullpen) and the catcher says, "The count's 0-1," I'll say, "Nah, let's say it's 1-0, or 2-1." It's easy to pitch when you're ahead all the time.

> "I THINK ROGER IS REALLY STARTING TO GET A HANDLE ON WHAT'S GOING WRONG AND HOW TO REMIND YOU ABOUT IT."

I'm working on trying to beat another team. I want to try to work out of jams. I make the count go against myself and try to make pitches against certain hitters - mentally and visually trying to put myself in a game situation. That way, in game time, hopefully I've practiced enough to where I can make those pitches when it really is 2-1 with runners on second and third and one out.

It's a pretty good workout, though I don't do the same thing each day I throw a bullpen session. One day I might throw a pretty hard session and the next day I might not have a hitter stand in and just try to make some nice pitches down in the zone, work on delivery type stuff.

I think Roger is really starting to get a handle on what's going wrong and how to remind you about it.

For example, in bullpen sessions, I might throw something, get around a slider, similar to the slider I threw to Aaron Boone (who hit a home run against Hudson on June 4) when my elbow dropped a little. I overthrew it. Two days later in the bullpen session, I did the same thing. I felt it, and Roger saw it, and I said, "That's the same pitch I threw to Boone." Roger said, "Yeah, just stay taller, make sure your arm is up and don't try to make it do too much. You just have to trust it."

It goes back to the confidence, just trusting your stuff and your pitches. It's hard sometimes. For instance, in that (June 4) game, I felt like I had great stuff and all the confidence in the world to go out there and shut them down. Then a couple of bad breaks here and there, and the next thing you know you're in a jam.

Instead of throwing the ball the way you've been throwing it, you want to turn it up a notch - just because you're in a jam - when you should just do the thing that gave you the confidence in the first place.

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

born and that inspired me even more to keep working and try to do the best I could here (in the United States) to get them ahead."

The Mariners signed Soriano in 1996 at age 16. His first challenge came off the field. He didn't speak English when he arrived, and in most minor league cities, few people knew Spanish. His bilingual teammates helped him at first, and he adjusted to life in America.

On the field, Soriano also had some early troubles. He began his minor league career as an outfielder/first baseman with Class A Peoria in the Arizona League. After a decent first season in 1997, he struggled to a .167 batting average the following year. The Mariners converted him to a pitcher in 1999. No easy task for a 19-year-old.

Soriano described how he made the transition smoothly due to his early playing experience. His Little League coach moved him all over the diamond. When he needed a pitcher, Soriano took the ball. Years later, that versatile background paid off. Soriano posted strong numbers as a starter at each minor league stop.

When he first joined the Mariners in 2002, the results were nothing special. Soriano went 0-3 with a 4.56 ERA in eight starts and two relief outings. The following season, Seattle manager Bob Melvin used him in long relief. When Melvin saw how Soriano's electric stuff baffled hitters, he began putting him in more and more key situations.

"They got to know the way I pitched," said Soriano, recalling the 2003 season when he posted a 1.53 ERA and struck out 68 batters in 53 innings. "People knew what I had and what I could do. After they watched how I performed, they put me in the setup role. That showed them what kind of pitcher I was in that situation."

Before he could emerge as a top reliever, Soriano went down with an injured elbow in 2004. He underwent Tommy John surgery that August, which cost him most of the 2005 season as well. He returned to his overpowering form last year, until a vicious line drive off Vladimir Guerrero's bat struck the right side of his head in August. While he has shown no lingering effects – either physical or physiological – the injury ended his 2006 season.

Soriano was both surprised and thankful that the Braves acquired him for Horacio Ramirez this past winter. Although Wickman has bounced back from his injury and continued to close successfully, Soriano may eventually take over the closer role or even become a starter. Whatever happens, he says he'll be ready.

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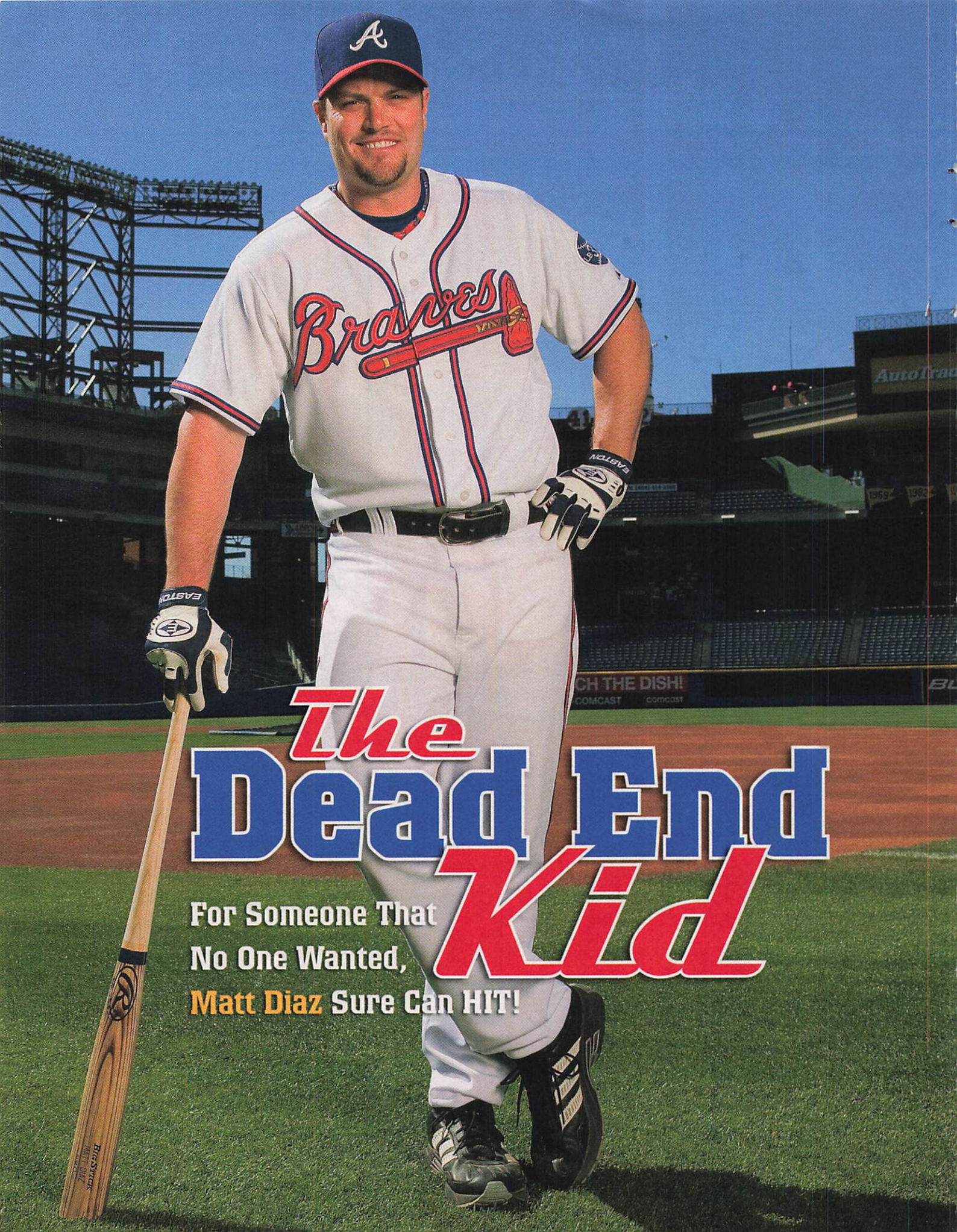


The Dead End Kid

For Someone That No One Wanted, Matt Diaz Sure Can HIT!

BY CHRIS BOONE

He's batted better than .300 at every level - college, the minors and the majors - but until he got to Atlanta, countless coaches tried to change the way Matt Diaz hit.

Admittedly, there are times when his swing would make former Braves pitcher Rick Camp - a lifetime .074 hitter - cringe. While Diaz may never be asked to appear in one of those instructional videos, numbers don't lie.

"It's different from any other swing I've seen before," said hitting coach and former NL batting champ Terry Pendleton. "Sometimes he looks bad, all off balance. But you know what? It works."

It always has.

Diaz, 29, said his swing was fairly orthodox coming out of high school, but once he got to Florida State University, coaches encouraged him to adopt more of an uppercut in order to take advantage of the short right-field fence at Tallahassee's Dick Howser Stadium.

"I was real spread out, like a Jeff Bagwell," said the affable leftfielder.

The results were immediate. Diaz was named The Sporting News' Freshman of the Year in 1998. The next year, he led the Seminoles to the College World Series title game against the Miami Hurricanes. In two seasons at FSU, Diaz batted .384, with 43 home runs.

The Tampa Bay Devil Rays selected him in the 17th round of the 1999 draft. For the first time, Diaz struggled.

"It didn't take me long to realize that I was a product of the aluminum bat," said Diaz, who hit only seven homers in his first two seasons of Class-A ball.

After hitting a soft .270 in 2000 for Class-A St. Petersburg, Diaz had a baseball epiphany.

"I was hitting in the cages at Florida State, working on a lot of things, and finally I found a happy medium," he said. "I called my wife (Leslee) and said, 'Honey, I got it.' I finally felt comfortable again."

Leslee Diaz filmed his swing, and he spent the rest of the winter studying the tape.

The next year, at Bakersfield, Diaz upped his average 58 points to .328, with 17 home runs, 81 RBIs and 172 hits - tops in all Class-A leagues.

He really took off in 2003, hitting .383 in 60 games at Double-A Orlando, then .328 in 67 games at Durham in the Triple-A International League, earning his first cup of coffee in the majors with Tampa Bay. Then the tinkering began.

"They tried to get me to swing like Ken Griffey Jr.," he said. "Every time I got called up to the big leagues, they'd try to change me."

Diaz batted .424 (25-for-59), second-best in the majors, during May and hit safely in 12 of his 14 starts that month.

Despite batting .332 in 2004 at Durham, Diaz was released by the Devil Rays. He was aging beyond prospect status (then 26), and Tampa Bay had a surplus of talented young outfielders.

Signed by Kansas City before the 2005 season, Diaz put up numbers impossible to ignore. In 75 games at Triple-A Omaha, Diaz hit .371, with 12 home runs and 49 RBIs. Still, when he got the call up to Kansas City, management tried to change him.

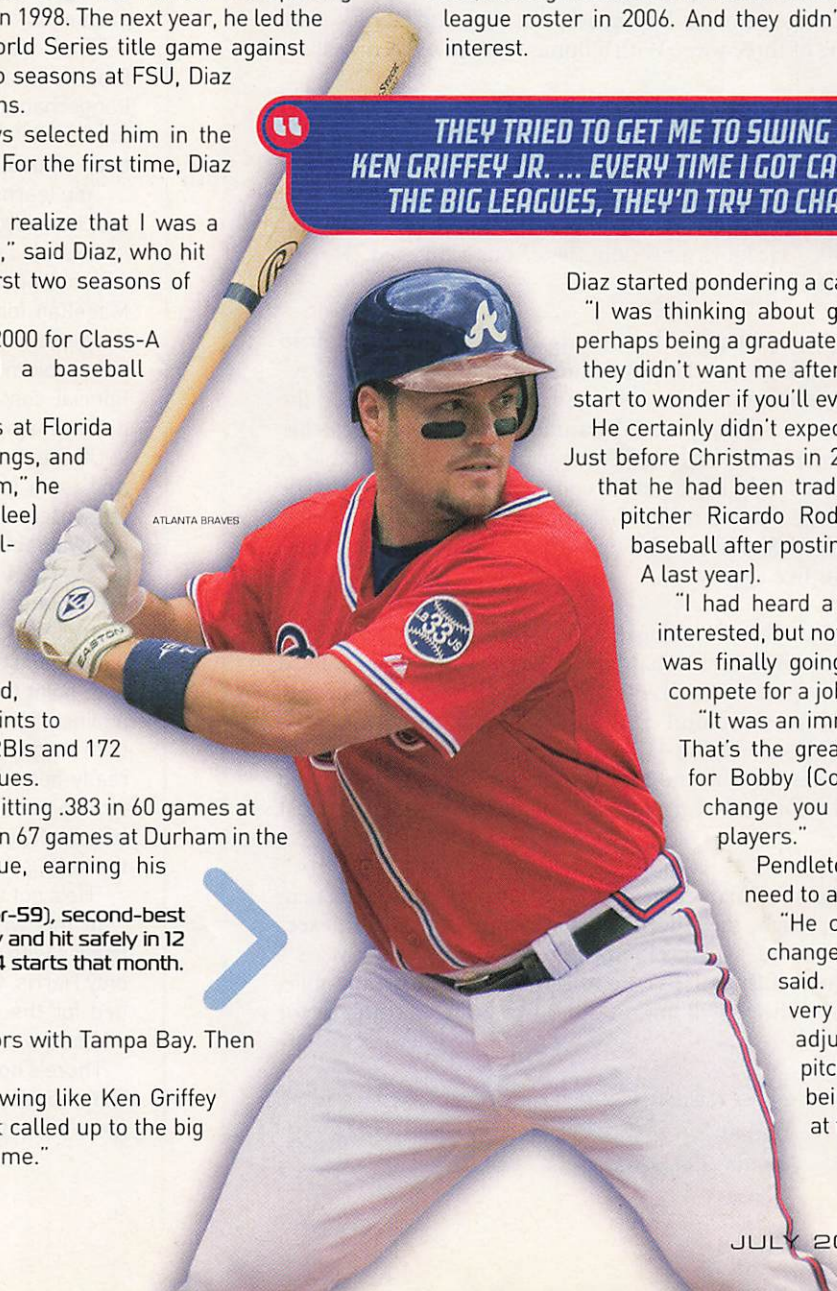
"The GM there told me I needed to walk more," said Diaz, a notoriously free swinger. "I was something totally different than what they wanted. They were looking for a 'Moneyball'-type hitter, a guy who takes a lot of pitches and hits a bunch of homers. That's not me."

For once, Diaz was stubborn.

"You know, I was having such success, I didn't want to change it," he said. "Every time I'd go back to the minors, my instructors there would ask me why I had changed my swing. It wasn't my idea."

Even though Diaz hit .281 in 89 at-bats for the woeful Royals in 2005, the organization informed him he would not be on the big league roster in 2006. And they didn't anticipate any trade interest.

> **"THEY TRIED TO GET ME TO SWING LIKE KEN GRIFFEY JR. ... EVERY TIME I GOT CALLED UP TO THE BIG LEAGUES, THEY'D TRY TO CHANGE ME."**



ALLISON SHARREFFS

Diaz started pondering a career change.

"I was thinking about going back to college, perhaps being a graduate assistant," he said. "If they didn't want me after hitting .370, then you start to wonder if you'll ever make it."

He certainly didn't expect to end up in Atlanta. Just before Christmas in 2005, Diaz got the call that he had been traded to the Braves (for pitcher Ricardo Rodriguez, who's out of baseball after posting a 6.68 ERA in Triple A last year).

"I had heard a few teams might be interested, but not Atlanta," Diaz said. "I was finally going to get a chance to compete for a job in spring training.

"It was an immediate comfort level. That's the great thing about playing for Bobby (Cox). They don't try to change you here. He trusts his players."

Pendleton said he never saw a need to alter Diaz's approach.

"He can hit, so why try to change anything?" Pendleton said. "Matt knows himself very well. He makes adjustments, pitch by pitch. He's got a knack for being at the wrong place at the right time."

Diaz said his success

BARRETT'S CATCHING IS CONCERN FOR CUBS

ATLANTA NATIVE **Michael Barrett**'s catching days with the Cubs could be numbered, and not simply because of his altercation with righthander **Carlos Zambrano** in the June 1 game against the Braves. When Zambrano pointed to his head in the moments leading to the brawl, apparently questioning what Barrett was thinking, it captured the team's frustration with the catcher's erratic, empty-headed play. Barrett is one of the game's better offensive catchers, but the Cubs could trade him if they conclude that they need better defense at catcher to contend.

Reds leftfielder **Adam Dunn**, the subject of trade discussions, is better suited for the America League, where he could serve as a designated hitter. One rival executive wonders how a player who was a top high school quarterback is now a "40" thrower on the scouts' 20-to-80 scale. His on-base/slugging percentage remains impressive, but most of Dunn's plate appearances end one of three ways: With a home run, strikeout or walk.

One rival general manager says that the Rangers are open to trading every player on their roster except shortstop **Michael Young**. The most likely to be moved? Closer **Eric Gagne**, even though he has limited no-trade protection that enables him to veto deals to 12 teams. However, several teams remain concerned about Gagne's durability coming off elbow and back surgeries in 2006. "He looks ginger out there," one scout said. "He just doesn't look comfortable."

Rival executives are contacting the Astros about righthander **Brad Lidge**, but one club official says the team would need to be "blown away" to trade the reliever now that he has returned to form and regained the closer's role. The Astros probably would want a premium young catcher and promising young pitcher for Lidge. Some teams would regard that as too high a price, considering the financial commitment that such a trade also would entail. Lidge, 30, is earning $5.35 million this season. His salary figures to rise to at least $8 million through arbitration next season. After that, he is eligible for free agency.

What's the most impressive thing about Diamondbacks lefthander **Randy Johnson** after nine starts? That he had struck out 70 and walked only 11. At that rate, Johnson's strikeout-to-walk ratio would be the second-best of his career, behind only his 2004 season with the Diamondbacks. He was averaging 11.74 strikeouts per nine innings – a jump over his two seasons with the Yankees, when he averaged 8.42 and 7.55. Not too shabby for a 43-year-old - or a pitcher of any age, for that matter.

The Marlins remain adamant that they will not trade third baseman **Miguel Cabrera**, but maybe they should start thinking about it. One executive predicts that Cabrera "will be **Manny Ramirez** in a couple of years – a DH and maybe an outfielder. He's 24 and getting to be near-immobile. But he will hit and he always will hit." In other words, he's a better fit for the AL.

- KEN ROSENTHAL IS A SENIOR WRITER FOR FOXSPORTS.COM

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is dependent on hitting the ball to right field. He's actually pleased when he hits the ball off his thumbs: "That's how I know I'm getting out of a slump. I have to guard myself against taking too big of a swing."

Pitchers have taken notice. Florida Marlins ace Dontrelle Willis, against whom Diaz has seven hits in 20 career at-bats (.350), compares Diaz's unorthodox style to Milwaukee Brewer Craig Counsell.

"Once a pitch is thrown, he's got good balance," Willis said. "He's got a lot of strength. He hits the ball consistently the other way, and that makes him tough to face. It's amazing to see how well he does with that stance."

Diaz said he finally feels like he belongs in the majors. Even after hitting .327 for the Braves in 2006, he said he came to Disney this spring feeling as if he had to earn a job.

"That was my thought process," said Diaz, who was competing against Ryan Langerhans and Craig Wilson for playing time in left field. Langerhans has since been traded, and Wilson was released.

"You learn not to take anything for granted," he added.

He's also worked hard on his defense, which once earned him the nickname Magellan for the way he seemed to circle the globe in pursuit of a flyball. A big part of his problem: Almost no depth perception. Special contact lenses fixed that, and his defense is no longer an issue.

Off the field, Diaz is a clubhouse favorite. And for a fellow journeyman who's found late success with the Braves, Diaz has been an invaluable sounding board.

"Everyone has that one guy on the team you connect with, and for me it's been Matty," said Willie Harris, who starts in left field against right-handed pitchers. (Not a sore point for Diaz, even though he hit .358 against righties in '06). "Me and Matty are both happy with what we're doing. He's really been helpful with my swing. I'll ask him sometimes what I'm doing wrong, and he's pretty good at noticing if I'm pulling off the ball.

"He's got a real good feel for hitting."

At this writing, Diaz was second on the Braves with a .331 batting average, trailing only Harris, who was at .391. Diaz also was tied for the major league lead with seven pinch-hits.

There's no longer any doubt that Diaz can "hit in any league." It took awhile, but people are finally starting to notice.

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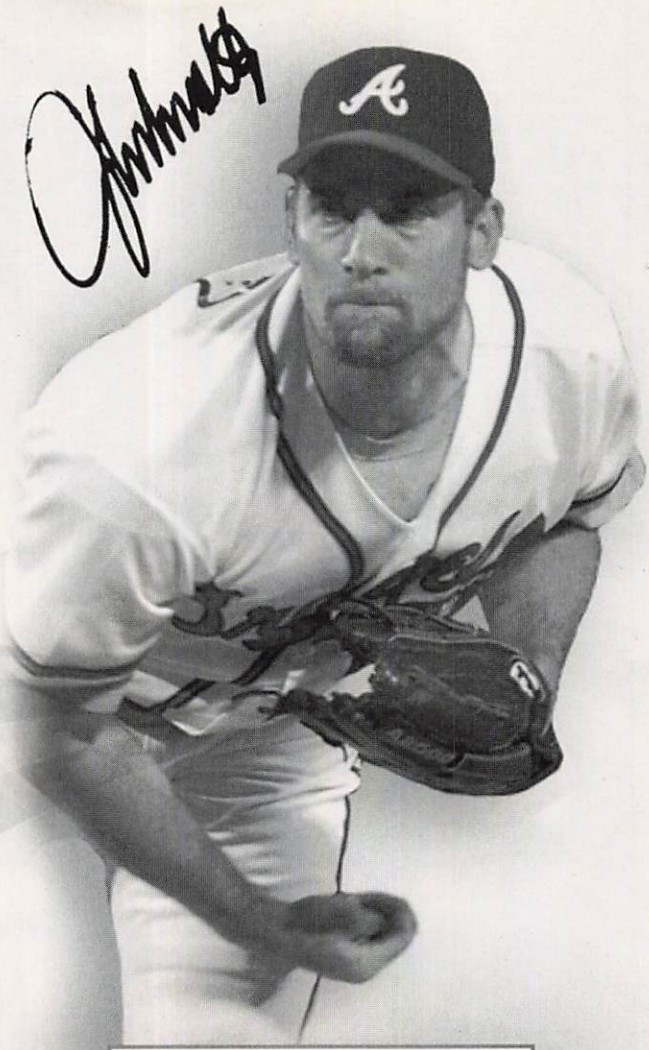

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NEW OWNERSHIP

LIBERTY MEDIA SEEKING TO MAINTAIN CONTINUITY THROUGHOUT THE ORGANIZATION

BY JON COOPER FOR MLB.COM

IT COULD HAVE BEEN any other evening between April and October at Turner Field - the batter's box and infield lines were precisely drawn and the bases in place.

That was the point that the Atlanta Braves front office wanted to make May 17 as it addressed the media to talk about Major League Baseball's owners' approval the previous day of the franchise's sale from Time-Warner, Inc., to Englewood, Colo.-based Liberty Media Corp.

"Continuity is one of the issues that was highest and utmost to Major League Baseball. That's part of the reason we're here today," said Braves chairman and president Terry McGuirk, who was joined on the grass area behind home plate by chairman emeritus Bill Bartholomay; senior vice president Henry Aaron; executive vice president and general manager John Schuerholz; executive vice president, business operations Mike Plant; vice president, assistant general manager-player personnel Frank Wren; and senior vice president, sales and marketing Derek Schiller.

"I wanted everyone to see who is running the Atlanta Braves going forward, and it's basically the people you knew yesterday," said McGuirk. "Everybody that was doing something yesterday in this organization is doing exactly the same thing tomorrow.

"This is a transparent transition for the team, the players, the manager, the front office," he added. "We changed the name on the deed and off we went last night and we're operating business as usual."

Continuity was the common theme.

"The Braves are in very good hands," said Bartholomay, who led the group that brought the franchise to Atlanta from Milwaukee in 1966. "Liberty is a great company. They believe in their interests being handled locally by management. You'll find that they'll be very supportive of us, as Time Warner has been, and I've never been happier to see that the Braves are in such good hands and I'm proud to be part of it."

"This will be a seamless, almost unrecognizable, transition," added Schuerholz. "I came here in 1991 with the promise of full autonomy as it relates to building the baseball functions of this organization and continue to work 17 years later with that same autonomy that allows me to make the decisions to build teams, put staffs together and move forward and try to win a championship."

The presence of Aaron not only was a show of support for the sale, but also an opportunity to announce that he will be taking a more active role in MLB's efforts to attract more African-Americans to the game.

"It's not an ambassador role; I'm going to be involved in this," said Aaron, who spent 13 years as vice president and director of player development before being named to his current role in December 1989, but who took this role at the behest of Selig. "I don't need to come back. I don't need the money. I'm coming back because the Commissioner wants me to come back. He is concerned about this. This is a problem, and I feel like I can make the difference."

"Hank is a very smart man, and people who have not experienced his business acumen have missed something," said McGuirk. "I served on the Turner Board with him throughout the '80s, through '95. So, I have a lot of experience on the business front with him, besides the baseball front. I know what he's capable of."

Schuerholz isn't expecting Braves fans to understand the nuts and bolts of the complicated deal that took 18 months to hammer out before finally being struck in February. The important thing for them is the bottom line will remain the same.

"I don't think they're going to care one iota who owns or doesn't own the Braves. They're going to care if their Braves win," he said. "As long as the ownership provides both financial and psychological support, which they have done for me - every group of owners that we've had, and I'm sure Liberty will do very much the same - and allows us to do what we need to do to win, that's what the fans care about."

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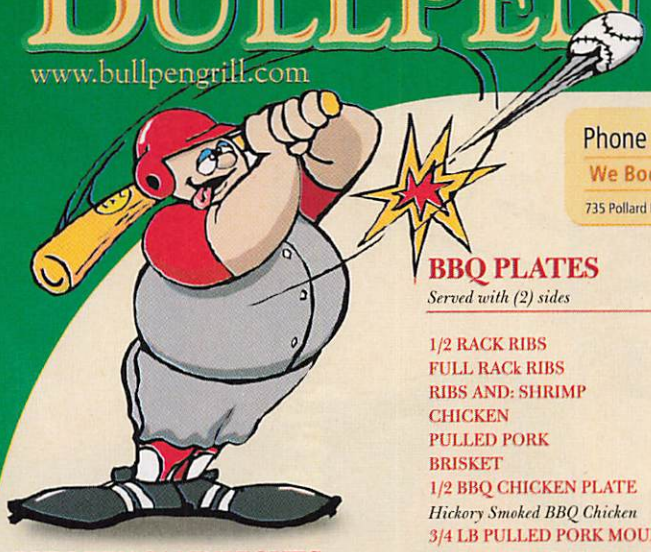

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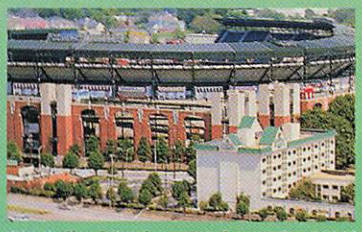

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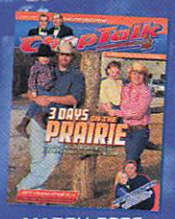

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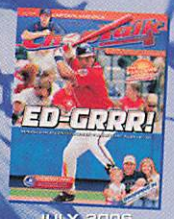

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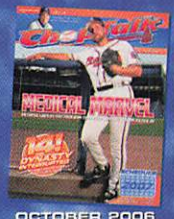

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MEASURING THE IMPACT OF KEY INJURIES ON WINS

BY STEVE FALL

WHEN A STAR such as Chipper Jones lands on the disabled list, the speculation begins as to how his loss will affect the team. While nobody can precisely quantify the cost in wins and losses, it's possible to estimate the impact of such an injury.

Since Chipper joined the Braves in 1995 – through June 1 of this season – the team has a .600 winning percentage (1,076-718) when he plays versus .549 (101-83) when he misses a game. So clearly the club performs better with him than without, but how costly is it to lose him for a 25-game period?

The club normally wins 60 percent of games Chipper plays, which calculates to a 15-10 record over 25 games. Applying the percentage without Jones (.549) over 25 games, results in just under 14 victories.

So, the estimated cost of Chipper's injury projects to slightly more than one win per 25 games.

The results are similar when Andruw Jones misses action. The Braves have gone 983-676 (.593) with Andruw since he joined the club in August 1996. Their winning percentage dips to .554 (31-25) when he hasn't played. Using the same method, the club also averages a 15-10 record in 25 games with their regular centerfielder. When Andruw misses action, the team again averages about 14 wins.

While one more loss out of 25 games may not sound like much, that adds up over a long season. The cost of a season-long injury – assuming the regular would have played 150 games – computes to about six additional defeats. That definitely could make the difference between reaching the playoffs or not - for that matter, so could just one loss.

A number of factors influence this method, which works best when players miss a significant number of games (at least 20 to 25). While it's far from perfect, this method provides one more way to determine the value of individual players.

ALLISON SHIRREFFS

Historically, when Chipper Jones is hurt, it costs the Braves an average of one win for every 25 games he's out, which can prove very significant in the standings.

John Smoltz and Tim Hudson have given the Braves an imposing 1-2 combo at the top of the rotation. However, through June 1, a huge gap separated their performance from other Atlanta starters. Both Smoltz and Hudson delivered 10 quality starts in their first 12 outings for an outstanding 83.3 percentage. The other starters managed just nine quality starts in 30 appearances (30 percent).

The disparity shows up in other key measures, as well. Smoltz and Hudson combined for a 13-5 won-lost record, versus 8-14 for all other starters. The Braves had gone 17-7 in games started by the big two, compared to 14-16 in all other games.

Smoltz and Hudson had given the club a 71 percent chance of winning their starts. When anyone else took the mound, that figure sank to 47 percent.

Trends like this will likely become less extreme as the season progresses. Smoltz and Hudson may not dominate as much, while the other starters should improve. If not, can the Braves ride this type of rotation into the post-season?

Other clubs have made the post-season with top-heavy staffs. The 2001 Diamondbacks went 92-70 and won the World Series behind Curt Schilling (22-6) and Randy Johnson (21-6). The team's remaining starters – none of whom won 10 games – combined for a 49-58 mark.

The 2004 Houston Astros also went 92-70 behind Roy Oswalt (20-10) and Roger Clemens (18-4). That tandem carried the club to within one game of the World Series, but the Cardinals beat them in a seven-game NLCS. No other pitcher on that staff won more than seven games.

Nearly all the recent successful Braves teams had balanced starting staffs, featuring at least three strong rotation members. The lone exception came in 2000. Tom Glavine (21-9) and Greg Maddux (19-9) both turned in strong years, then came a huge drop-off to Kevin Millwood (10-13) and John Burkett (10-6). While the latter two pitchers both posted double-digit wins, they also had ERA figures over 4.60. That team went 95-67 to capture the NL East, but the Cardinals swept them in the NLDS.

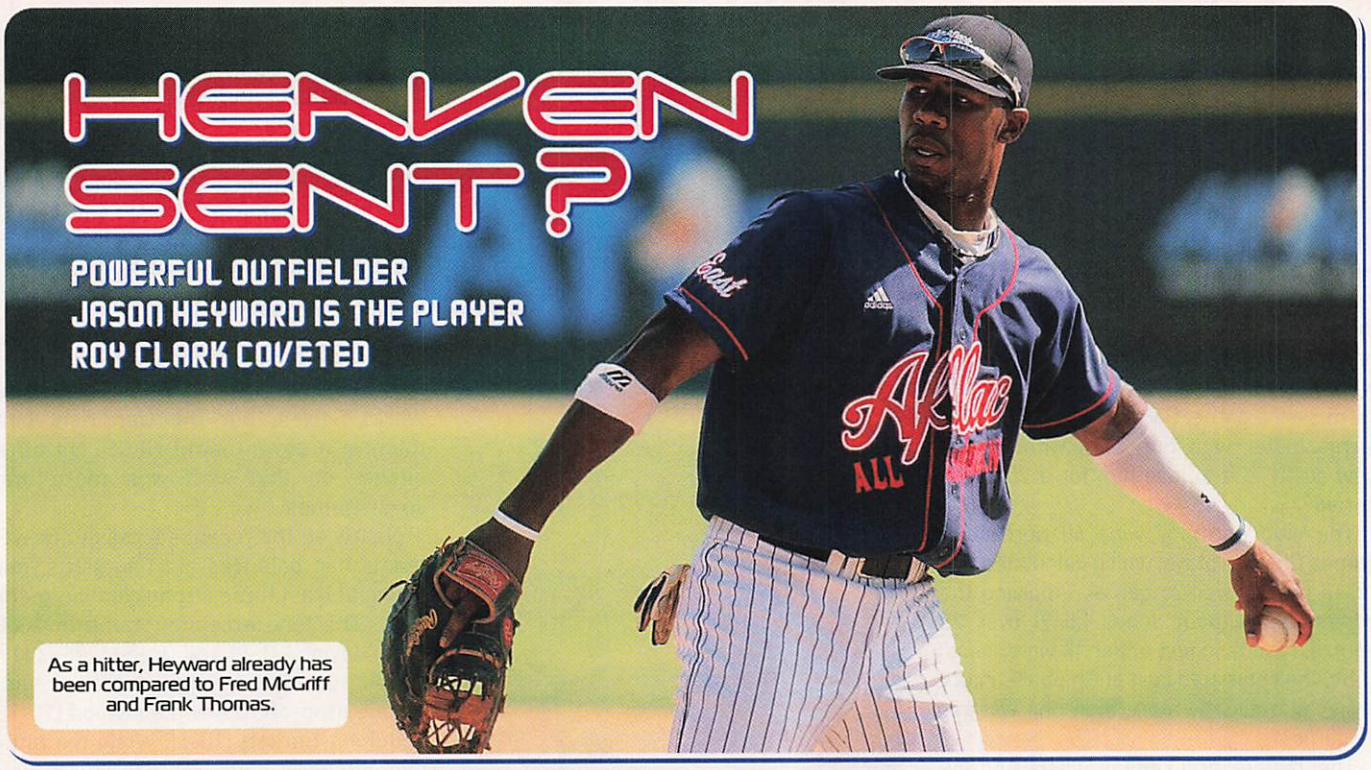
The Braves have a much better chance for success if Chuck James, Kyle Davies, or another starter steps forward.

When Smoltz won his 200th game on May 24, the Braves joined the Giants as the only teams in history to have five pitchers win 200 games for their franchise. No other National League club has had more than two. In addition to Smoltz, Warren Spahn (356), Kid Nichols (329), Phil Niekro (268) and Glavine (242) have all reached this level. Maddux, who won 194 games in a Braves uniform, nearly made the group, as well.

Since 1980, Smoltz and Glavine are the only two pitchers to win 200 or more games for one team. Three factors have combined to make this an increasingly rare achievement: Players change teams more often now than during other baseball eras; five-man rotations give starters fewer opportunities to record wins; and pitchers don't work nearly as far into games today.

HEAVEN SENT?

POWERFUL OUTFIELDER JASON HEYWARD IS THE PLAYER ROY CLARK COVETED



As a hitter, Heyward already has been compared to Fred McGriff and Frank Thomas.

SPECIAL

BY CHRIS GIGLEY

ON THE EVE of this year's first-year player draft, scouting director Roy Clark asked his staff to call on a higher power for help with getting the player they wanted in the first round.

"I asked each of our scouts to say a little prayer that Jason Heyward would still be there at 14 (14th pick)," said Clark. "Someone was looking out for us, because it didn't take me long to figure out who we were taking when our turn came around."

Heyward, of course, was still available, although several projections had him going in the top 10.

"Not only does Jason have tremendous upside on the field, (but) once you meet him, you see he's exactly what we're looking for in this organization," said Clark. "He's a true professional - on and off the field."

Bobby Cox agrees. On draft day, the Braves' manager had the chance to meet Heyward, an outfielder who went to high school in McDonough, just south of Atlanta.

"He's a fine young man," said Cox. "He won't be 18 years old until August, and he's a specimen! He's 6-5 and 220 pounds. His dad played basketball at Dartmouth, but to my knowledge, baseball is all Jason played."

Heyward's focus on the one sport is obvious. He not only has strong tools and tremendous athleticism, but he has a good feel for the game. Entering his final year at Henry County High, Heyward was a Louisville Slugger pre-season first-team All-American who batted .427 with 25 RBIs, five homers and 23 steals as a junior. He met all expectations, hitting .520 with eight homers and 32 RBIs as a senior.

Long before that, Heyward proved he could handle pressure with ease. As an eight-year-old in 1988, he helped lead his McDonough Dodgers team to an AABC Roberto Clemente World Series championship. He later led Henry County High to its first state championship in baseball.

Heyward has never shied away from challenges. He spent his past two summers playing on the highly regarded East Cobb travel team with fellow 2007 first-rounder Josh Smoker (Washington) and Braves 2006 first-rounder Cody Johnson. And last year, he earned an invitation to the prestigious Aflac All-American High School Baseball Classic in San Diego, where he competed against the nation's top 37 seniors.

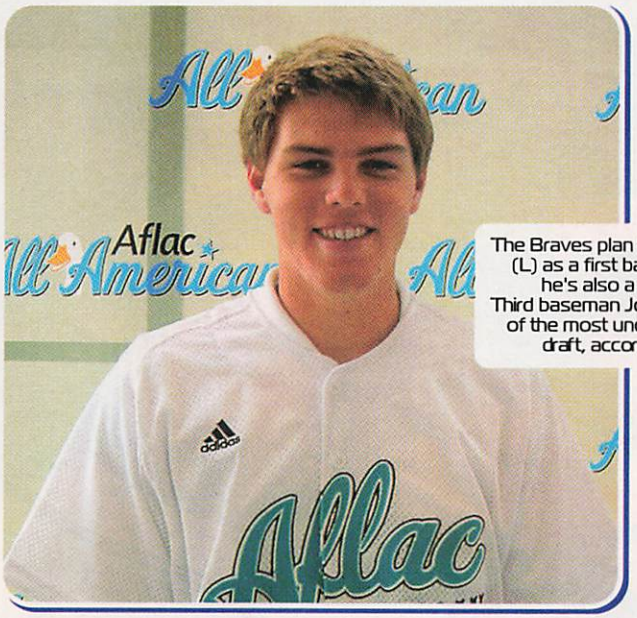
As good as Heyward's makeup is, it's what he can do on the field that really has Cox and Clark excited. Heyward's plate discipline and pitch recognition are outstanding for a teenager, and when he gets a pitch to hit, he shows above-average bat speed and the ability to drive the ball to all fields with authority.

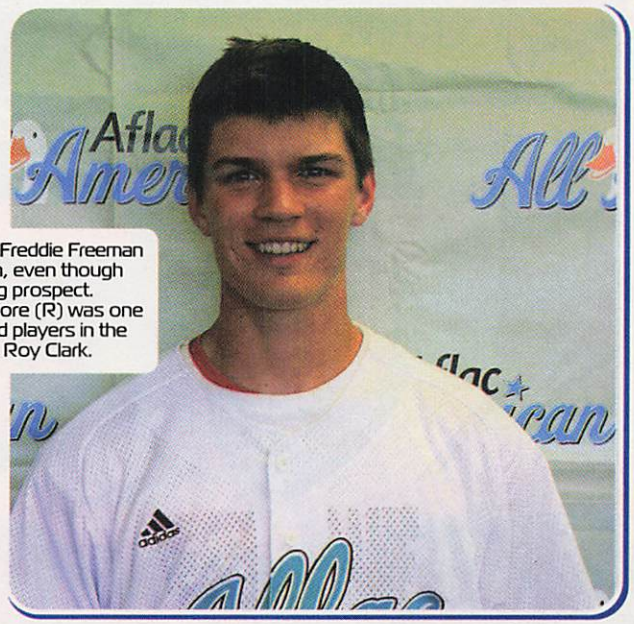
Since teams draft in the opposite order of the previous year's position in the standings, the Braves' selection of Heyward as the 14th pick is the earliest selection they've had since 1991 (Mike Kelly). He's the fourth Georgia high school player since 2000 that the Braves have taken with their first selection (Adam Wainwright, 2000; Macay McBride, 2001; and Jeff Francoeur, 2002).

Heyward's size and hitting ability have earned him favorable comparisons to Fred McGriff and Frank Thomas, although he has more upside than the latter as a fielder.

"He has all the tools to be a corner outfielder in the major leagues," said Clark. "Offensively, he's a very disciplined hitter with tremendous power. He's just a special player."

Clearly, Clark's prayers have been answered.





The Braves plan to use Freddie Freeman (L) as a first baseman, even though he's also a pitching prospect. Third baseman Jon Gilmore (R) was one of the most underrated players in the draft, according to Roy Clark.

SPECIAL

CLASS OF 2007

CALCULATED RISKS IN EARLY ROUNDS PROVIDE SEVERAL PLAYERS WITH FIRST-ROUND TALENT

BY CHRIS GIGLEY

BY TAKING calculated risks early in this year's first-year player draft, the Braves may have collected the equivalent of five first-round picks instead of the two they had.

"I thought that if everything went right, we had the chance to add impact players to our system," said scouting director Roy Clark. "That's exactly what happened."

First-round pick Jason Heyward is clearly one of those impact players. The 6-5, 220-pound slugger offers a rare combination of power and plate discipline and should rise quickly through the minors. But the Braves got a lot more value than Heyward.

Supplemental first-rounder Jon Gilmore, a high school third baseman from Iowa, fell under the radar when hamstring issues hampered him this spring. But like Heyward, Gilmore has a quick bat that should produce power in time.

"I think he was one of the most underrated players in this draft," said Clark. "If he didn't have hamstring problems and lived somewhere like Georgia or Florida, he wouldn't have been there for us at 33 (33rd overall pick)."

If second-rounder Josh Fields (69th overall) pitched as a junior like he had as a sophomore at the University of Georgia, he wouldn't have been drafted by the Braves either. The righthander led the Cape Cod League with 13 saves in 2006 and was labeled as a relatively safe early pick until control issues derailed him.

"We know he had a disappointing spring," said Clark. "But we think when we get him into our system with our outstanding pitching coaches, we can get him back on track."

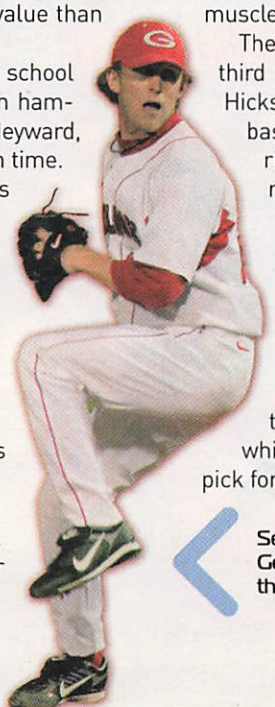
The Braves had another second-round pick (78th overall) and used it on Freddie Freeman, a high school first baseman and right-handed pitcher out of California. He helped his team to a playoff berth playing both ways, and he has performed consistently well with Team USA and in showcases. The risk with Freeman involves his desire to hit as a pro. Many scouts were intrigued by his pitching ability.

"He'll play first base for us," said Clark. "He's a big, strong guy who in a few years, when he puts on another 20 to 25 pounds of muscle, will have big-time power potential."

The Braves took a pair of polished college players in the third and fourth rounds. Texas A&M shortstop Brandon Hicks (108th) has good instincts in the field and on the bases, and fourth-rounder Cory Gearrin (138th), a righthander out of Mercer, profiles as a solid middle reliever.

Fifth-rounder Dennis Dixon (168th) could be the biggest surprise. He's the current starting quarterback at the University of Oregon and hasn't played organized baseball since 2003.

"We worked him out on numerous occasions, and he's a special athlete," said Clark, who signed Dixon within days of the draft. "It will take him a little time because he hasn't seen live pitching for a while. But with his athletic ability, it was a worthwhile pick for us."



Second-round pick Josh Fields of the University of Georgia had a disappointing spring, but the Braves think they can get him back on track.

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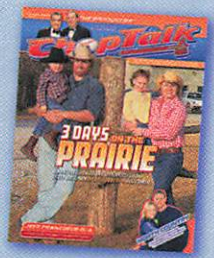

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THE NEW RECRUITS

ROUND	OVERALL	PLAYER	POSITION	SCHOOL
1	14	**Jason Heyward**	OF	Henry County HS, McDonough, Ga.
Compensation	33	**Jon Gilmore**	3B	Iowa City HS
2	69	**Joshua Fields**	RHP	Georgia
2	78	**Freddie Freeman**	1B	El Modena HS, Orange, Calif.
3	108	**Brandon Hicks**	SS	Texas A&M
4	138	**Cory Gearrin**	RHP	Mercer
5	168	**Dennis Dixon**	OF	Oregon
6	198	**Michael Fisher**	SS	Georgia Tech
7	228	**Travis Jones**	2B	South Carolina
8	258	**Colby Shreve**	RHP	CC of Southern Nevada
9	288	**Tim Ladd**	LHP	Georgia Tech
10	318	**Tommy Palica**	LHP	Golden West (Calif.) JC
11	348	**Brandon Belt**	LHP	San Jacinto (Tex.) JC
12	378	**Nick Fellman**	RHP	Minnesota State-Mankato
13	408	**Chad Maddox**	OF	Tennessee
14	438	**Caleb Brewer**	RHP	Harris County HS, Hamilton, Ga.
15	468	**Paul Demny**	RHP	East Bernard (Tex.) HS
16	498	**Eddie Burns**	RHP	Georgia Tech
17	528	**Benji Johnson**	C	North Carolina
18	558	**Randy Gress**	SS	Quinnipiac
19	588	**Brett Butts**	RHP	Auburn
20	618	**C.J. Lee**	OF	E. Tennessee State
21	648	**Kuyaunnis Miles**	OF	Chattahoochee Valley (Ala.) CC
22	678	**Lyle Allen**	OF	Cartersville (Ga.) HS
23	708	**Edmond Sparks**	C	Lovejoy HS, Hampton, Ga.
24	738	**Mitch Harris**	RHP	Navy
25	768	**Rico Reid**	RHP	East Coweta HS, Sharpsburg, Ga.
26	798	**Daniel Elorriaga-Matra**	C	Douglas HS, Parkland, Fla.
27	828	**Adam Milligan**	OF	Walters State (Tenn.) CC
28	858	**Rashod Henry**	OF	Lumberton (Miss.) HS
29	888	**Gary Gillheeney**	RHP	Bishop Hendricken HS, Warwick, R.I.
30	918	**Rene Escobar**	1B	Riverside (Calif.) CC
31	948	**Benino Pruneda**	RHP	San Jacinto (Tex.) JC
32	977	**T.J. Wohlever**	LHP	Western Nevada CC
33	1,006	**Craig Kimbrel**	RHP	Wallace State (Ala.) CC
34	1,035	**Robert Maddox**	1B	Villa Angela-St. Joseph HS, Cleveland
35	1,064	**Chris Moon**	OH	Tucson (Ariz.) High Magnet HS
36	1,093	**Vernell Warren**	2B	Grant HS, Portland, Ore.
37	1,121	**Randy Yard**	RHP	Palm Desert (Calif.) HS
38	1,149	**Will Casey**	LHP	Kennesaw Mountain HS, Kennesaw, Ga.
39	1,177	**Elliott Armstrong**	OF	Harlan Community HS, Chicago
40	1,205	**Anthony Whitenton**	SS	Heritage HS, Conyers, Ga.
41	1,231	**Sheldon Johnson**	RHP	Deptford (N.J.) HS
42	1,257	**Bryson Rahler**	C	Cajon HS, San Bernardino, Calif.
43	1,283	**Ryan Chaffee**	RHP	Chipola (Fla.) JC
44	1,309	**Dock Doyle**	C	Coastal Carolina
45	1,335	**Tarus Thomas**	OF	St. Dominic HS, Oyster Bay, N.Y.
46	1,359	**Brett Krill**	OF	Aliso Niguel HS, Aliso Viejo, Calif.
47	1,382	**Goldy Simmons**	RHP	San Diego CC
48	1,403	**Joe Lincoln**	C	Tipton (Mo.) HS
49	1,424	**Tyreace House**	OF	JC of the Canyons (Calif.)
50	1,445	**Andrew Armstrong**	LHP	Turner Ashby HS, Bridgewater, Va.

BY BILL BALLEW

MYRTLE BEACH "GOBBLING" OVER SUCCESS OF HERNANDEZ

BASEBALL HISTORY is filled with a plethora of strange trades. In 1930, Chattanooga owner Joe Engel swapped shortstop Johnny Johns for a live turkey. Thirty years later, Cleveland and Detroit exchanged managers on Aug. 3, 1960, with Jimmy Dykes joining the Tigers and Joe Gordon becoming the Indians' dugout chief.

Another manager, Chuck Tanner, went from Oakland to Pittsburgh on Nov. 5, 1976, for catcher Manny Sanguillen.

Such precedents led the Braves to request compensation when the Baltimore Orioles hired pitching coach Leo Mazzone after the 2005 season. At the time, Atlanta's acquisition of righthander Moises Hernandez attracted little fanfare. The pitcher's development, however, has shown that the Braves' scouting staff once again did its job, thereby giving the organization a pitcher that certainly does not resemble a "turkey."

STEVE TERRY

Through games of June 12, Hernandez was tied atop the minor leagues with nine victories. He received decisions in 11 of his 12 starts at Class-A Myrtle Beach, including six straight wins from May 9-June 5. That equaled the second-longest string in Pelicans history, established previously by Daniel Curtis, Kyle Davies and Christian Parra. (Trey Hodges won nine straight from May 5-June 16, 2001.)

More impressive than his victory total is the way Hernandez has handled the job. The older brother of Seattle Mariners ace Felix Hernandez has been a workhorse, reaching at least the seventh inning in seven of his last nine starts, including back-to-back eight-inning stints in his last two outings. The 23-year-old righthander also allowed two earned runs or less in eight starts and never yielded more than four earned runs in a single outing. As a result, he led the Carolina League with 75 2/3 innings pitched.

"He's been as consistent as any pitcher I've seen at this level in some time," said Myrtle Beach manager Rocket Wheeler. "He's pitched well and given us a lot of innings. He's given our bullpen some much-needed rest and kept us competitive when the team was experiencing a lot of changes with the roster."

The lone blip on the radar thus far came when Hernandez was promoted to Double-A Mississippi on June 10. He held Birmingham hitless in the first two innings before surrendering single runs in the next two and watching the floodgates open in the fifth. By the time of his departure, Hernandez allowed seven hits and seven earned runs in 4 1/3 innings to suffer the loss.

Primarily a reliever with the Pelicans in 2006 when he saved 10 games, Hernandez was promoted to Mississippi after Jo-Jo Reyes made an emergency start for Richmond. Whether or not Hernandez will return to Coastal Federal Field was uncertain at press time, which placed his spot on the Carolina League All-Star team as the lone Myrtle Beach representative in jeopardy.

"I'd hate to think where we'd be without him," Wheeler said. "He's very deserving of the All-Star recognition. He's matured as a person and on the mound since last season. His numbers

RICHMOND
TRIPLE A

BRAYAN PENA is not sulking about being in the minors after entering the season as the backup to **Brian McCann** in Atlanta. Pena put together an 11-game hitting streak from June 1-11, the longest by any R-Brave this season, and raised his batting average from .171 to .289. He has struggled against left-handed pitching, hitting just .192, compared to .344 versus righthanders. While Braves officials are adamant that Pena remains in the team's plans behind the plate, he is also seeing activity in left field and at third base and first base in an attempt to improve his versatility and increase his value as a major leaguer...

Outfielder **T. J. Bohn**, who had played only once since May 28, was placed on the disabled list retroactive to June 7 with a hamstring injury. Bohn's roster spot was filled by former Baltimore Oriole **Larry Bigbie**, who began the season with Las Vegas in the Pacific Coast League and hit .349 in 34 games before exercising an option in his contract to receive his release on June 1. The transactions increased the R-Braves' roster moves to 60 for the season. Bohn joined pitchers **Phil Stockman** and **Jonathan Johnson** on the disabled list...

Corky Miller has helped shut down opponents' running games by throwing out an International League-best 46.2 percent (24 of 52) of would-be basestealers...

Jo-Jo Reyes and **Brad Nelson** flip-flopped roster spots in Richmond, with both pitchers earning wins in their Triple-A debuts. They were promoted from Mississippi during a stretch in which the R-Braves played back-to-back doubleheaders

and six games in four days. Nelson earned his victory with 2 2/3 innings of scoreless relief on June 9 versus Buffalo, while Reyes limited the Bisons to four hits (including three by former Brave **Andy Marte**) in six innings a day later. Reyes, who was 7-1 with a 3.80 ERA in his first 12 Double-A starts this year, continues to show outstanding poise while mixing his slider and sinking fastball...

Jeff Bennett has been exceptional out of the Richmond bullpen. He worked 21 consecutive scoreless innings over nine appearances from May 14-June 10. Bennett pitched with Milwaukee in 2004 before spending 2005 in Triple-A. He sat out the 2006 season before signing with Atlanta last winter as a six-year minor league free agent...

Martin Prado did not commit an error in his first 155 chances at second base and has shown significant improvement with his range and in turning the doubleplay. He had been charged with only one error through June 12, which occurred while playing third base on April 13...

Brent Lillibridge showed an impressive combination of speed and power during his first game at The Diamond following a June 1 promotion to Richmond. Lillibridge hit a home run down the left field line and beat out an infield hopper over the mound in his home debut on June 5 against Pawtucket. Lillibridge has impressed Brundage with his willingness to absorb instruction while making the most of every minute once he arrives at the ballpark...

The possibility of adding veteran relief help in the form of 40-year-old **Rheal Cormier** ended in early June when the 15-year big league veteran decided to retire...

No one in Richmond was surprised with **Yunel Escobar**'s early success in Atlanta following his first promotion to the big leagues on June 2. Though raw in certain aspects of the game and at times too aggressive at the plate, the Braves' second-round draft pick from 2005 made some impressive adjustments in the International League. Escobar batted .264 and committed 26 errors last year at Mississippi, yet made significant improvements, leading to a .333 batting average and seven errors in his first 46 minor league games in 2007.

MISSISSIPPI
DOUBLE A

J.C. HOLT is in the midst of his best season since signing with the Braves as a third-round draft pick in 2004. Holt spent two weeks with Richmond, from May 21-June 4, while **Martin Prado** was promoted to Atlanta, and responded to his first taste of the Triple-A level by hitting .292 in 13 games...

Brandon Jones joins Holt in having a breakout year. The former high school football standout impressed in the past with his athleticism, but the Braves see the left-fielder polishing his skills. He is aggressive at the right moments and is displaying a significant increase in power. In addition to hitting .294 through June 12, Jones had 11 home runs, with 27 of his first 74 hits going for extra bases...

Outfielder **Carl Loadenthal**, who won the Carolina League batting title last season, put together a 13-game hitting streak from May 26-June 7. First baseman **Mark Jurich** equaled Loadenthal's effort by hitting safely in 13 straight from May 29-June 10...

Matt Harrison earned his first victory since May 2 when he scattered 10 hits for three earned runs over six innings versus Birmingham on June 8...

Dan Smith was promoted to Richmond and won his first two starts after going 4-2 and ranking second in the Southern League with a 1.94 ERA during the first two months of the season. Smith's void in the Mississippi rotation was filled by **James Parr**, who was promoted from Myrtle Beach. Parr, a fourth-round draft pick in 2004, became the first full-time righthander to join the M-Braves' rotation this season. He allowed only three earned runs in 13 combined innings during his second and third starts with Mississippi after going 3-4 with a 3.18 ERA in eight starts with Myrtle Beach...

Joey Devine returned to Mississippi June 5 after serving a four-day stint in Atlanta as an insurance policy. Devine leads the SL with 15 saves, even though his string of solid outings ended when he gave up a two-out, two-run walkoff home run to Birmingham's Victor Mercedes on June 9. The sidearmer has worked with pitching coach **Derek Botelho** on landing on his toe instead of his heel in completing his delivery, a change that is allowing Devine to throw harder and with better command...

Kelvin Villa has struggled since he tossed seven shutout innings versus Montgomery on May 27. Villa has seen his ERA increase to 5.97 after getting hit hard in his first three starts in June...

Mississippi manager **Phillip Wellman** was suspended by Atlanta for three games after his 10-minute tirade at Chattanooga. Wellman disagreed with the home plate umpire's strike zone by covering the plate with dirt and drawing the outline of a new plate, throwing two bases, and then tossing the resin bag like a grenade after crawling up the back of the mound.

MYRTLE BEACH
ADVANCED A

KALA KA'AIHUE was named the Carolina League's Player of the Week on June 11 after going 14-for-28 during the previous six games. Ka'aihue also became the Myrtle Beach career home run leader, with half of his 26 career homers in a Pelicans uniform coming this season. The first baseman also established the franchise record by driving in a run in nine straight games, through June 12. After hitting just .167 in April, he batted at a .475 clip in his first 40 at-bats in June to raise his average to .288...

Jairo Cuevas opened the season with an 0-8 record, but found better luck in June. He picked up his first win of the season on June 6 prior to taking a no-hitter into the ninth inning on June 12 before surrendering a single up the middle. The righthander finished the night with his second victory by allowing one hit and three walks while striking out seven...

Eric Campbell endured a difficult first half. The third baseman, who established Rome single-season records with 22 home runs and 77 RBIs in 2006, has struggled to find his rhythm at the plate, thanks in large part to a left thumb ligament injury that sidelined him for more than a month. Since returning on May 21, Campbell had a .165 average in his first 21 games back and opened June in a 4-for-42 slump...

Consistency has also come and gone for **Matt Young**, who was sidelined with the same type of injury as Campbell. In his first 23 games since returning to the lineup on May 18, Young hit .253, including six straight two-hit games from May 27-June 1. Young's absence limited the Pelicans due to his ability to play second base and both outfield corner positions...

The Pelicans' struggles this season came when much of the bullpen was promoted to Double-A after strong starts at Myrtle Beach. **Sung Ki Jung** filled the void of a steady closer by posting six saves in seven opportunities since his arrival on May 20. Jung, who employs a nasty three-quarters delivery, missed the past three seasons while serving in the South Korean army. His last experience prior to this year came at Rome in 2003, when he posted a 2.16 ERA with 18 saves...

Utility infielder **Derrick Arnold** has been slowed since mid-May when he suffered a

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

HOME RUN RECORD IS NICE, BUT IMPROVING IS MY GOAL

EDITOR'S NOTE
Kala Ka'aihue is a 6-2, 230-pound first baseman from Hawaii. He was named Carolina League Player of the Week (ending June 10) for hitting .500 (14-for-28) with three home runs and 11 RBIs and setting the Myrtle Beach career home run record (24). Last year, he led all Braves farmhands with 28 homers and 80 RBIs.

YOU CAN NEVER BE SATISFIED in this game. Lately I've been hitting the ball well, but I know things can change in a minute.

Fortunately, I have a much better approach than when I started the season. I feel a lot more comfortable at the plate, and I have a better plan. I'm just trying to stick with it.

I really wanted to do well early, because I was here in Myrtle Beach during the second half of last season. It's not that I felt bad at the plate. For some reason, I just couldn't get anything started. I wanted to help the ballclub so much that I started pressing. Once I settled down and let everything take care of itself, the entire situation improved.

In early June, I set the career home run record at Myrtle Beach. An accomplishment like that is nice, but it's not anything I was trying to achieve. I'm sure there are a lot of guys who could have set the record, but they got moved up before it happened. If it was a major league record, then I might think about it a little more.

Don't get me wrong. I'm glad that I have been productive with my power numbers since I've been with the Pelicans, but hitting 20-some home runs is nothing to get excited about.

> "EVERYONE CALLS ME KK, ANYWAY, SO IT DOESN'T MATTER WHETHER PEOPLE REFER TO ME AS ISAIAH OR KALA."

I was satisfied with the way many things went last year. I loved playing in Rome. The fan base there is great, and I really liked the city. We won the first half, which always makes things better. Our manager, Randy Ingle, and coach, Bobby Moore, made things fun. Rome is also close to Atlanta, and on our off-days, we made it to a major league game or two.

There's no question I was comfortable in Rome. Fans may not realize how important it can be for a player to be comfortable where he is playing. It can play a role in your performance.

It seemed like a lot of people learned my name last year. I really don't know what happened with the name situation this season. I think someone filled out a paper on me early on as Isaiah instead of Kala.

It sounded all right when I went up to bat, so I didn't make a big deal about it. It was an honest mistake, and I decided to leave it the way it was. Everyone calls me KK, anyway, so it doesn't matter whether people refer to me as Isaiah or Kala.

My brother, Kila, plays in Wilmington, another team in the Carolina League. We usually talk every day or at least every other day on the phone. There's a little bit of baseball thrown into our conversations, but mostly it's about other things. For example, our sister recently graduated from school, and we talked about what to get her. We talk about our parents, too. They came to the first series of the season when Wilmington and Myrtle Beach played each other. That was a pretty neat situation, because it was the first time Kila and I had played on opposing teams in the same game.

I have a lot of room to grow as a player, so what I'm trying to do is to have a good full season and improve my skills at the same time.

It can be hard to judge how well you're doing when you're not facing major league competition. Right now, I just want to keep hitting the ball and put together a good year so I can keep moving up.

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

laceration and chipped bone in the middle finger of his right hand. Making the injury more difficult is a bone spur in the same area...

Jonny Venters is proving that recovery from surgery is a big task. He missed all of 2006 due to surgery. After pitching primarily in relief for the first month with the Pelicans, Venters moved into the rotation in late May. He struggles on occasion with control. However, at Kinston on June 9, Venters walked no one and struck out nine while allowing only three hits in six innings, his longest stint of the season.

ROME
CLASS A

PITCHER TOMMY HANSON and outfielder **Concepcion Rodriguez** were named to the South Atlantic League's Southern Division All-Star team. The game was scheduled at Rome's State Mutual Stadium on June 19...

Hanson entered the midway point of the season with a string of bad luck. On June 7, the righthander had a no-hitter into the seventh inning and finished with a career-high 12 strikeouts, yet suffered the 1-0 loss to Columbus. Four days later, Hanson left a start with back spasms in the fourth inning. Despite owning just two wins in his first six decisions, Hanson has pitched well, allowing two earned runs or less in 11 of his first 13 starts. He also has led the league in strikeouts for most of the season...

Chase Fontaine's bat has warmed with the weather. During a three-game stretch with Greenville on June 7-9, the shortstop went 9-for-11 with five RBIs. Atlanta's second-round draft pick in 2006, Fontaine raised his batting average 30 points with 14 hits in his first 32 at-bats in June...

Kris Medlen emerged as Rome's closer. After missing most of the first month with elbow tendonitis, Medlen blew two of his first three saves opportunities before finding his groove. A 10th-round draft pick in 2006, Medlen had saves in four straight opportunities from May 29-June 9 and did not allow a run in nine straight outings...

The team pulled off the first tripleplay in Rome Braves history in the bottom of the fifth at Savannah on May 31. Shortstop **Robert Marcial** caught a line drive before picking the runner off first by throwing the ball to **Tyler Flowers**. Flowers then threw back to Marcial to nail the runner at second...

Carlos Sencion was promoted to Myrtle Beach on June 4 after going 2-1 with a 3.72 ERA in 14 relief outings with Rome.

FARM STATISTICS

RICHMOND 37-26

INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE TRIPLE A | THE DIAMOND (804) 359-4444

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Blanco, Gregor (OF)	.295	62	227	44	67	10	1	2	20	31	39	11
Bohn, T.J. (OF)	.241	46	145	20	35	8	0	1	14	21	41	8
Canizares, Barbaro (1B)	.304	20	56	8	17	4	0	1	14	8	12	0
Clark, Doug (OF)	.245	59	196	25	48	8	1	3	29	22	38	8
Escobar, Yunel (SS)	.333	46	180	20	60	10	3	2	29	14	27	7
Franco, Iker (C)	.209	23	67	8	14	3	0	1	6	6	15	0
Holt, J.C. (2B)	.292	13	48	10	14	4	0	0	3	4	8	3
Koonce, Graham (1B)	.214	30	98	11	21	5	0	8	25	10	27	0
Lillibridge, Brent (SS)	.250	13	44	4	11	1	0	2	5	3	13	3
McCarthy, Bill (OF)	.224	49	165	19	37	7	2	5	18	14	45	2
Mendez, Carlos (1B)	.291	39	134	12	39	8	0	5	20	6	20	0
Miller, Corky (C)	.207	40	111	5	23	5	0	1	10	15	17	2
Pena, Brayan (C)	.289	25	90	9	26	5	0	1	14	3	12	2
Prado, Martin (INF)	.308	47	169	25	52	10	2	0	14	17	21	3
Schuerholz, Jonathan (INF)	.194	27	67	8	13	1	0	0	6	7	7	5
Timmons, Wes (3B/1B)	.235	50	149	21	35	10	0	2	15	11	12	4

PITCHER	W-L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	OBA
Acosta, Manny	5-1	0.95	24	0	7	38.0	22	7	4	18	37	.175
Baerlocher, Ryan	0-1	3.86	3	3	0	18.2	20	8	8	6	10	.274
Barry, Kevin	2-3	3.94	10	9	0	45.2	48	24	20	17	31	.273
Basner, Ryan	1-2	4.23	8	4	0	27.2	26	15	13	11	19	.257
Bennett, Jeff	0-1	2.35	16	1	1	30.2	27	8	8	15	17	.245
Boyer, Blaine	0-0	4.20	8	1	2	15.0	14	8	7	10	11	.269
Carlyle, Buddy	5-2	2.59	9	9	0	48.2	40	15	14	9	56	.225
Hernandez, Buddy	5-2	2.19	22	0	2	37.0	30	11	9	7	27	.226
Hodges, Trey	2-3	4.78	12	11	0	52.2	51	28	28	30	33	.266
Johnson, Jonathan	1-4	6.45	10	9	0	44.2	57	33	32	21	26	.322
Lerew, Anthony	1-0	1.37	5	5	0	26.1	20	5	4	8	15	.211
McBride, Macay	1-2	3.13	7	5	0	23.0	26	10	8	7	24	.274
Scalamandre, Rich	0-3	6.16	11	0	1	19.0	23	17	13	9	10	.311
Smith, Dan	2-1	4.41	3	3	0	16.1	18	8	8	10	5	.290
Startup, Will	3-1	2.40	25	0	1	30.0	24	8	8	11	28	.220
Winkelsas, Joe	1-0	3.97	5	0	0	11.1	10	6	5	5	7	.250

MISSISSIPPI 40-26

SOUTHERN LEAGUE AA | TRUSTMARK PARK (601) 664-7600

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Burrus, Josh (OF)	.202	46	124	14	25	2	0	3	19	22	38	5
Creek, Greg (1B)	.254	48	169	21	43	11	0	1	13	19	40	1
Esquivel, Matt (OF)	.256	65	254	47	65	10	2	14	51	26	56	9
Hernandez, Diory (2B/SS)	.341	44	167	20	57	12	1	4	29	10	24	9
Holt, J.C. (2B)	.369	27	111	15	41	4	0	0	4	12	27	8
Jones, Brandon (OF)	.293	65	256	42	75	14	3	11	44	32	61	8
Jurich, Mark (1B)	.280	47	150	22	42	15	0	3	32	15	31	1
Lillibridge, Brent (SS)	.275	52	204	31	56	8	3	3	17	20	60	14
Loadenthal, Carl (OF)	.311	61	225	34	70	5	1	0	14	29	31	23
Pope, Van (3B)	.180	57	205	22	37	8	4	2	22	14	38	7
Rozema, Mike (INF)	.280	23	82	15	23	3	1	4	14	9	17	4
Saltalamacchia, Jarrod (C)	.309	22	81	18	25	7	0	6	13	13	17	2
Sammons, Clint (C)	.279	29	111	10	31	7	0	2	14	5	22	0
Serrano, Ray (C)	.298	13	47	10	14	4	0	1	4	6	8	2

PITCHER	W-L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	OBA
Ascanio, Jose	2-0	2.92	23	1	3	49.1	43	18	16	12	40	.240
Basner, Ryan	0-0	0.00	7	0	0	12.0	6	1	0	4	9	.143
Bueno, Francisley	2-3	3.33	11	10	0	54.0	57	23	20	18	42	.271
Bullock, Tyler	0-0	4.76	5	0	0	11.1	11	8	6	5	3	.268
Devine, Joey	2-3	2.22	26	0	15	28.1	19	8	7	12	41	.194
Harrison, Matt	5-1	3.53	12	12	0	66.1	67	27	26	22	44	.270
Morton, Charlie	4-3	3.72	23	1	0	38.2	38	17	16	21	31	.260
Nelson, Brad	3-0	4.50	11	1	0	28.0	30	14	14	6	12	.268
Nix, Michael	3-3	2.03	19	0	0	31.0	25	13	7	12	30	.219
Parr, James	0-0	4.00	3	3	0	18.0	16	8	8	3	14	.246
Reyes, Jo-Jo	7-1	3.80	12	12	0	66.1	56	30	28	34	61	.237
Schreiber, Zach	3-1	1.47	25	0	3	30.2	18	6	5	16	29	.180
Smith, Dan	4-2	1.94	9	9	0	51.0	37	14	11	20	41	.204
Villa, Kelvin	3-5	5.97	13	13	0	60.1	80	46	40	34	48	.321
Winkelsas, Joe	0-2	1.83	10	0	0	19.2	16	9	4	7	17	.216

MYRTLE BEACH 28-37

CAROLINA LEAGUE ADVANCED A | COASTAL FEDERAL FIELD (843) 918-6002

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Alvarez, Roberto (OF)	.238	46	168	21	40	9	2	2	18	12	34	3
Andrus, Elvis (SS)	.230	63	239	37	55	11	3	2	21	29	54	19
Arnold, Derrick (INF)	.227	45	141	17	32	5	0	1	9	6	30	4
Bennett, Paul (INF)	.280	26	75	9	21	4	1	1	9	16	28	5
Cabrera, Willie (OF)	.224	24	85	8	19	0	0	1	6	6	7	2
Camarena, Jose (C)	.244	41	135	12	33	7	0	3	16	12	32	1
Campbell, Eric (3B)	.170	31	112	19	19	4	0	5	15	13	16	2
Davis, Quentin (OF)	.241	64	232	24	56	6	4	1	23	14	34	24
Hernandez, Diory (2B)	.313	17	64	9	20	8	2	0	9	2	11	2
Kaaihue, Kala (1B)	.279	55	190	33	53	14	1	13	41	28	60	0
Roberts, J.D. (OF/1B)	.199	46	151	10	30	6	0	1	14	10	45	1
Rozema, Mike (INF)	.294	20	68	10	20	1	1	2	15	9	13	1
Sammons, Clint (C)	.269	23	78	13	21	6	0	4	13	10	14	1
Schafer, Jordan (OF)	.281	36	146	23	41	9	6	3	17	11	35	8
Verastegui, Jerry (C)	.295	13	44	6	13	3	0	0	5	4	8	0
Young, Matt (OF/2B)	.240	36	129	12	31	5	1	1	10	22	24	9

PITCHER	W-L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	OBA
Acosta, Jorge	1-2	6.33	15	0	0	27.0	27	20	19	19	24	.267
Bullock, Tyler	1-1	6.75	15	0	1	17.1	22	15	13	9	13	.310
Cho, Jang Ji	0-1	8.15	11	0	0	17.2	25	17	16	9	10	.329
Cuevas, Jairo	2-8	5.37	12	12	0	57.0	51	40	34	31	52	.231
Evans, Dustin	1-4	4.67	10	10	0	52.0	53	31	27	19	41	.268
Gunderson, Kevin	2-3	4.05	22	0	6	26.2	28	16	12	19	17	.275
Hernandez, Moises	9-2	3.09	12	12	0	75.2	75	31	26	19	41	.254
Jung, Sung Ki	0-1	3.86	9	0	6	9.1	8	4	4	4	13	.242
Nelson, Brad	3-0	0.00	9	0	1	13.2	10	0	0	3	8	.208
Parr, James	3-4	3.18	8	8	0	39.2	36	14	14	6	37	.252
Payano, Nelson	1-2	2.53	20	1	0	32.0	19	13	9	31	47	.179
Stanley, Adam	1-1	5.87	19	0	1	38.1	42	25	25	24	22	.276
Stevens, Jake	4-4	6.17	11	11	0	54.0	63	42	37	25	26	.299
Valenzuela, Sergio	0-0	4.34	15	1	0	29.0	33	18	14	10	15	.287
Venters, Jonathan	0-1	3.32	10	5	1	40.2	32	20	15	18	37	.218

ROME 25-41

SOUTH ATLANTIC LEAGUE CLASS A | STATE MUTUAL STADIUM (706) 368-9388

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Brezeale, Danny (3B)	.242	55	194	28	47	17	0	4	32	8	58	1
Britton, Phillip (C)	.258	35	132	23	34	9	1	3	18	3	17	2
Cabrera, Willie (OF)	.245	34	143	15	35	8	0	1	15	5	16	1
Flowers, Tyler (1B)	.233	36	129	17	30	7	1	1	15	17	26	1
Fontaine, Chase (2B/SS)	.279	59	204	38	57	9	3	2	15	30	53	8
Hernandez, Victor (C)	.235	21	68	3	16	2	0	0	7	5	15	0
Lundahl, Chad (INF)	.225	57	218	22	49	7	0	2	22	11	44	0
Marcial, Robert (INF)	.245	17	53	3	13	1	0	0	7	2	10	2
Miles, Cole (2B)	.245	16	53	6	13	1	0	0	2	5	10	4
Monk, Brandon (INF)	.174	19	69	4	12	4	0	0	6	2	17	0
Morris, Joshua (1B)	.165	34	121	11	20	8	0	1	10	12	36	0
Owings, Jon (OF)	.250	42	156	23	39	7	1	4	15	16	41	3
Rodriguez, Concepcio (OF)n	.215	56	200	25	43	14	0	4	24	25	37	4
Schafer, Jordan (OF)	.372	30	129	16	48	15	2	5	20	16	31	4
Silva, Yohan (OF)	.244	38	119	20	29	4	2	2	10	16	26	1
Williams, Larry (OF/1B)	.267	60	243	14	65	9	2	1	22	21	39	0

PITCHER	W-L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	OBA
Broadway, Michael	3-3	7.01	12	1	0	25.2	35	24	20	12	16	.324
Chapman, Jaye	0-1	7.04	4	0	0	7.2	11	6	6	2	5	.344
Cofield, Kyle	3-5	4.30	13	6	1	52.1	49	28	25	20	45	.249
Curtis, James	2-1	3.86	8	0	1	14.0	18	6	6	4	7	.340
Gustafson, Timothy	2-5	5.09	13	13	0	63.2	75	44	36	23	55	.299
Hanson, Thomas	2-5	2.36	13	12	0	68.2	44	24	18	23	84	.181
Heath, Deunte	2-2	2.14	13	7	0	59.0	54	17	14	17	39	.245
Johnson, Joseph	1-1	4.87	17	0	0	20.1	24	12	11	15	20	.304
Jones, Beau	0-0	2.88	10	0	2	25.0	20	8	8	8	21	.217
Lyman, Jeffrey	1-7	4.45	13	13	0	64.2	69	42	32	26	54	.272
Medlen, Kristopher	0-0	1.50	11	0	5	12.0	8	2	2	2	19	.182
Reynoso , Ryne	2-3	2.10	17	0	0	30.0	24	10	7	18	38	.216
Richmond, Jamie	2-4	3.00	13	13	0	66.0	66	34	22	16	50	.253
Sencion, Carlos	2-1	3.72	14	0	0	38.2	31	19	16	17	50	.215
Valenzuela, Sergio	0-1	7.27	4	0	0	8.2	14	7	7	3	9	.389
Wilson, Tyler	3-2	5.47	18	0	2	26.1	25	17	16	20	39	.253

2008 SCHEDULE

TENTATIVE; SUBJECT TO CHANGE.
FOR SEASON, GROUP AND SUITE TICKET INFORMATION, CALL (404) 577-9100 OR VISIT braves.com

JUNE/JULY

ALL-STAR GAME | TURNER FIELD | AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
24 8:05 PM DET ESPN	25 7:05 PM WSH SS	26 7:35 PM WSH SS	27 7:35 PM WSH FSN SOUTH	28	29 7:05 PM FLA SS	30 7:05 PM FLA TBS
1 1:05 PM FLA TBS	2 10:10 PM LAD SS	3 10:10 PM LAD TBS	4 9:10 PM LAD FSN SOUTH	5 10:10 PM LAD TBS	6 10:05 PM SD TBS	7 3:55 PM SD FOX
8 8:05 PM SD ESPN	9	10 FOX ALL-STAR GAME COMING SUMMER 2008 SAN FRANCISCO	11	12	13 7:35 PM PIT TBS	14 7:05 PM PIT SS
15 1:05 PM PIT TBS	16 7:05 PM CIN SS	17 7:35 PM CIN SS	18 1:05 PM CIN TBS	19 7:35 PM STL FSN SOUTH	20 7:35 PM STL FSN SOUTH	21 7:05 PM STL SS
22 1:05 PM STL TBS	23 10:15 PM SF SS	24 10:15 PM SF TBS	25 10:15 PM SF TBS	26 7:05 PM SF TBS	27 9:40 PM AZ TBS	28 3:55 PM AZ FOX
29 4:40 PM AZ TBS	30	31 7:35 PM HOU SS				

AUGUST

TURNER FIELD | AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 7:35 PM HOU FSN SOUTH	2 7:35 PM HOU TBS	3 7:35 PM COL TBS	4 7:05 PM COL TBD
5 1:05 PM COL TBS	6	7 7:10 PM NYM SS	8 7:10 PM NYM FSN SOUTH	9 12:10 PM NYM TBS	10 7:05 PM PHI TBS	11 7:05 PM PHI SS
12 1:35 PM PHI TBS	13	14 7:35 PM SF SS	15 7:35 PM SF FSN SOUTH	16 7:35 PM SF TBS	17 7:35 PM AZ SS	18 7:05 PM AZ SS
19 1:05 PM AZ TBS	20 7:10 PM CIN SS	21 7:10 PM CIN SS	22 7:10 PM CIN FSN SOUTH	23 7:10 PM CIN SS	24 8:10 PM STL SS	25 7:15 PM STL SS
26 2:15 PM STL TBS	27 7:05 PM FLA SS	28 7:05 PM FLA SS	29 7:05 PM FLA FSN SOUTH	30	31 7:35 PM NYM SS	

ROSTER

As of June 14

PITCHERS 15+

38	Buddy Carlyle
40	Lance Cormier*
26	Kyle Davies
51	Mike Gonzalez*
15	Tim Hudson
36	Chuck James
50	Anthony Lerew*
49	Macay McBride
58	Peter Moylan
54	Chad Paronto
29	John Smoltz
39	Rafael Soriano
56	Oscar Villarreal
28	Bob Wickman
33	Tyler Yates

*DISABLED
+ 12 PITCHERS ACTIVE

CATCHERS 2

16	Brian McCann
18	Jarrod Saltalamacchia

INFIELDERS 7

19	Yunel Escobar
2	Kelly Johnson
10	Chipper Jones
4	Pete Orr
11	Edgar Renteria
20	Scott Thorman
5	Chris Woodward

OUTFIELDERS 4

23	Matt Diaz
7	Jeff Francoeur
22	Willie Harris
25	Andruw Jones

SEPTEMBER

TURNER FIELD | AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1 3:55 PM NYM FOX
2 1:05 PM NYM TBS	3 1:05 PM PHI TBS	4 7:35 PM PHI SS	5 1:05 PM PHI TBS	6	7 7:35 PM WSH FSN SOUTH	8 7:05 PM WSH TBS
9 1:05 PM WSH TBS	10 7:10 PM NYM SS	11 7:10 PM NYM SS	12 7:10 PM NYM FSN SOUTH	13	14 7:05 PM WSH SS	15 7:05 PM WSH TBS
16 1:35 PM WSH TBS	17 7:05 PM FLA SS	18 7:35 PM FLA SS	19 7:35 PM FLA FSN SOUTH	20 7:35 PM MIL SS	21 TBA MIL ESPN	22 7:05 PM MIL SS
23 1:05 PM MIL TBS	24	25 7:05 PM PHI SS	26 7:05 PM PHI FSN SOUTH	27 7:05 PM PHI SS	28 8:05 PM HOU SS	29 7:05 PM HOU SS
30 2:05 PM HOU TBS						

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2	3 07 DIVISION SERIES	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11 07 LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24 07 WORLD SERIES GAME 1	25 07 WORLD SERIES GAME 2	26	27 07 WORLD SERIES GAME 3
28 07 WORLD SERIES GAME 4	29 07 WORLD SERIES GAME 5*	30	31 07 WORLD SERIES GAME 6*	1 07 WORLD SERIES GAME 7*		

DIVISION SERIES — TBS & TNT

LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP — TBS

WORLD SERIES — FOX

* If Needed

All games on The Bull (94.9) and WGST-AM (640)

ESPN Cable Sports Network

FOX Fox Broadcasting System

FSN Fox Sports Net South

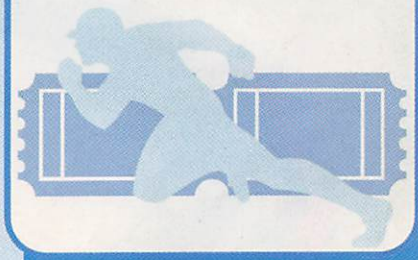
TBS Turner Broadcasting System

SS SportSouth

All games also on MLB-TV (webcast) and XM Radio (satellite).

PROMO GAMES FREE STUFF

Date	Giveaway	Visitors	To First	Sponsor
June 25	Andruw Jones Bats	Nationals	15,000	Home Depot
July 19	Brian McCann Statues	Cardinals	15,000	Coca-Cola
July 21	Rally Flags	Cardinals	45,000	NAPA
Aug. 2	Brian McCann T-Shirts	Astros	10,000	Delta
Aug. 5	Baseball Cards	Rockies	TBD	Upper Deck
Aug. 16	Chipper Jones Statues	Giants	15,000	Coca-Cola
Aug. 31	Braves Hats	Mets	45,000	Delta
Sept. 9	Pet Calendars	Nationals	TBD	Pet/Garden
Sept. 20	John Smoltz Statues	Brewers	15,000	Coca-Cola



ChopTalk FAQs & CONTACTS

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- Call 1-877-655-CHOP (2467) It's best to call between 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. (Eastern) Monday-Friday when representatives are available to assist you. At other times or in the event all lines are busy, you can leave a us voice mail message. Please have your mailing info ready.
- Write us at ChopTalk, P.O. Box 922847, Norcross, Ga. 30010-2847.
- You can also e-mail us at: Letters@ChopTalkonline.com. Be sure to include the name and address on your mailing label.

READING THE MAILING LABEL

Your mailing label consists of letters and numbers that directly correspond to you and your address. On the label, the second line is your account number. Use this number when inquiring about your subscription. If the name or address on the subscription changes, the account number will also change.

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It takes 2-4 weeks to receive your first issue of ChopTalk. Your first issue will be in the mail within 1-3 weeks of subscribing. At your request, we can start your subscription with a future issue.

ISSUES ARRIVING LATE?

ChopTalk is mailed (second-class) to reach you by the 10th of each month. If you have missed an issue, or have continual problems getting your magazine in a timely manner, please contact us and also call the consumer affairs department at your post office.

ARE YOU MOVING?

Please notify us in writing of any address change so you don't miss a single issue of ChopTalk. Send your name, account number, old address and new address to: ChopTalk, P.O. Box 922847, Norcross, Ga. 30010-2847. Or you can e-mail us at Letters@ChopTalkonline.com. The post office will NOT do this for you.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

TERM	DOMESTIC	CANADA & MEXICO	OTHER FOREIGN
1 YEAR	$36.50	$54.95	$74.95
2 YEARS	$64.95	NA	NA

GIFT SUBSCRIPTIONS

Rates for gift subscriptions are the same as above. We will send the recipient a personalized ChopTalk gift card (please specify General or Happy Holidays). When ordering, be sure to include the recipient's name and address, along with your name, address and phone number.

TICKETING

TO PURCHASE SEASON TICKETS
OR FOR MORE INFORMATION,
CALL (404) 577-9100 OR VISIT braves.com

ASK ABOUT PRICES ON PRO-RATED PLANS

4-GAME PACK

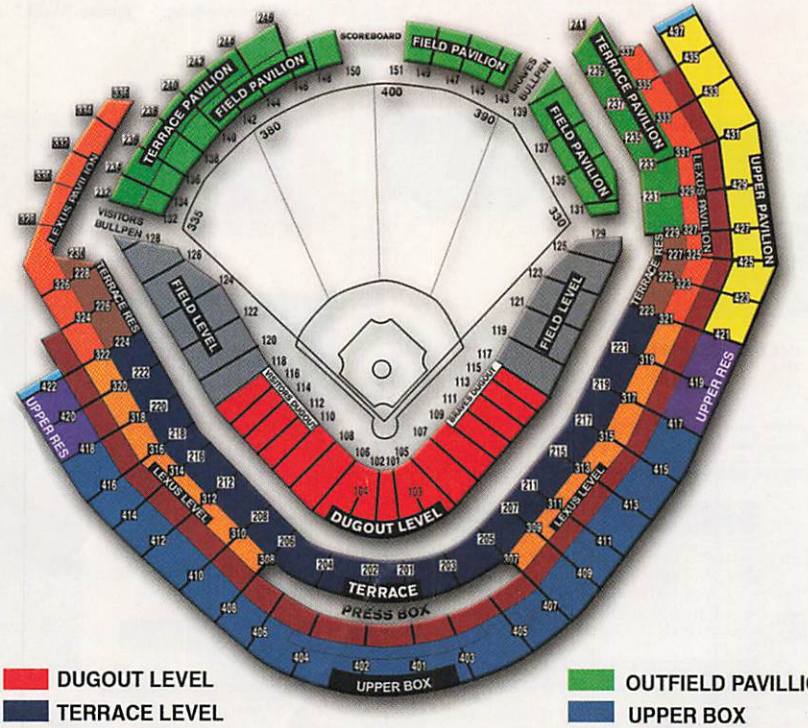
Terrace Level.....$132
Outfield Pavilion.....$76
Upper Box.....$44

Labor Day Pkg: Aug. 31 (Mets),
Sept. 1 (Mets),
Sept. 2 (Mets),
Sept. 3 (Philadelphia).

GIVE A GIFT CARD

Braves Gift Cards are available in $25 and $50 denominations and can be used to purchase Tickets, Concessions and Merchandise.

To purchase gift cards or to obtain more information, visit Braves.com or the Braves Clubhouse Store at CNN Center (call 404-523-5854).



- DUGOUT LEVEL
- TERRACE LEVEL
- FIELD LEVEL
- LEXUS
- OUTFIELD PAVILLION
- UPPER BOX
- TERRACE RESERVED
- LEXUS PAVILLION
- UPPER PAVILION

FLEX PLANS

* Minimum 9 Games For As Low As $99

Location	Regular Price*	Flex Price*	Premium Price*	Flex Price*
Lexus Level	$36	$35	$40	$35
Terrace Level	$34	$33	$38	$33
Lexus Pavilion	$28	$27	$32	$27
Outfield Pavilion	$20	$19	$24	$19
Upper Box	$12	$11	$16	$11

* Per Game

20-GAME PACKS

Pre-Selected Games.
$680/Pack Lexus Level
or $600/Pack Field Level

Murphy Plan (Tuesdays & Fridays)
Aaron Plan (Wednesdays & Saturdays)
Niekro Plan (Thursdays & Sundays)
Spahn Plan (Key Weekdays)

MUSEUM & TOUR INFO

The Ivan Allen Jr. Braves Museum features more than 500 Braves artifacts that trace the team's history from its beginnings in Boston (1871-1952) to Milwaukee (1953-65) to Atlanta (1966-present). It is located on the northwest side of Turner Field at aisle 134. The museum opens two and a half hours before each game and closes in the middle of the seventh inning. The museum is open year-round and is the starting point of one-hour guided tours of Turner Field. Tours leave on the hour.

Tour reservations are not necessary for individuals or groups of less than 20 people. Tickets can be purchased the day of the tour at the main ticket window. Free parking in the Green lot.

Admission to the museum during games is one token ($2) and $5 on non-game days. Tour tickets are $10 for adults, $5 for children and $7 for groups of 20 or more. Walk-up tickets can be purchased at the ticket window. Groups of 20 or more and school groups must make reservations two weeks in advance by calling (404) 614-2311.

HOURS OF OPERATION

APRIL - OCTOBER
Monday - Saturday ..... 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Sunday ..... 1 - 3 p.m.

OCTOBER - MARCH
Monday - Saturday ..... 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

DEC. 23-JAN. 3 ..... CLOSED

TOUR TICKETS

ADULTS $10
CHILDREN 13 and Under $5

*Subject to change
Tours not available when the Braves have afternoon home games

SEASON PARKING*

Full Season $850
Half Season $430
Weekend Plan $310
20-Game Plan $200

* Includes Free Post-Season Parking

TICKET INFO

INDIVIDUAL PRICES

Location	Gate Price	Premium Price*	Season Price
Dugout	$56	$60	$48
Suite	$56	$60	$48
Lexus	$36	$40	$32
Field	$34	$38	$28
Terrace	$34	$38	$28
Lexus Pavilion	$28	$32	$26
Terrace Reserved	$24	$28	$22
Field/Terrace Pavilion	$20	$24	$10
Upper Box	$12	$16	$10
Upper Reserved	$8	$12	N/A
Upper Pavilion	$6	$6	$3
Skyline	$1	$1	N/A

*All Friday and Saturday regular season games plus the June 18-20 series vs. Boston Red Sox

SEASON PLANS & PRICES

Location	Full Season (83 games)	Half Season (42 games)	Weekend 30 Games	20-games
Dugout	$3,984	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lexus	$2,656	$1,428	$1,020	$680
Field	$2,324	$1,260	$900	$600
Terrace	$2,324	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lexus Pavilion*	$2,158	N/A	$780	N/A
Terrace Reserved*	$1,826	N/A	$660	N/A
Field/Terrace Pavilion	$830	$672	$480	N/A
Upper Box	$830	$462	$330	N/A
Upper Pavilion	$249	N/A	N/A	N/A

*Lexus Pavilion & Terrace Reserved – Buy two (2) full season seats & get 2 full seats free

SPECIAL PACKAGES

GRAND SLAM PACK

"MasterCard Grand Slam packs" include 4 tickets, 4 hot dogs, 4 Cokes, a Braves yearbook and a parking pass! Available every Sunday through Thursday.

Location	Regular Games
Upper Box	$59
Outfield Pavilion	$79
Lexus Pavilion	$99

TWO-FOR-ONE TUESDAYS

Fans can purchase two-for-one Upper Level Reserved seats on "Coca-Cola Two-For-One Tuesdays."

OUTFIELD ADVANTAGE

Fans can purchase two-for-one Outfield Pavilion seats on "McDonald's Outfield Advantage" Wednesdays.

COLLEGE/MILITARY 2 FOR 1

Show college or military ID for 2 for 1 Upper Box seats.

THEME GAMES

July 13	Pirates	*Firefighters Appreciation* Firefighters in Plaza
July 14	Pirates	*Christmas in July* Santa, Snow in Plaza, Toy Drive
July 21	Cardinals	*NASCAR Night* Stock Cars in-game
Aug. 4	Rockies	*Disco Day* Disco Theme
Aug. 14	Giants	*Law Enforcement Night* Law Enforcement in Plaza
Aug. 18	Diamondbacks	*Elvis Night* Flying Elvis
Sept. 1	Mets	*Latin Day* Latin Theme
Sept. 8	Nationals	*'80s Mullet Head Night* '80s Theme

GAME BY GAME

GAME	DATE	OPP.	H/A	W-L	SCORE	W/L PITCHER	ATL HRs	REC.	POS.	GB
1	4/2	PHI	A	W	5-3 (10)	Wickman (1-0)	McCann (1), Renteria 2 (2)	1-0	T-1	--
2	4/4	PHI	A	W	3-2 (11)	McBride (1-0)	McCann (2), Thorman (1)	2-0	2	- 1/2
3	4/5	PHI	A	W	8-4	James (1-0)	Johnson (1)	3-0	T-1	--
4	4/6	NYM	H	L	1-11	Redman (0-1)	Francoeur (1)	3-1	2	-1
5	4/7	NYM	H	W	5-3	Smoltz (1-0)	Diaz (1)	4-1	T-1	--
6	4/8	NYM	H	W	3-2	Soriano (1-0)	Johnson (2)	5-1	1	--
7	4/10	WAS	H	W	8-0	Hudson (1-0)	A. Jones (1), Francoeur (2)	6-1	1	+1
8	4/11	WAS	H	W	8-3	James (2-0)	A. Jones (2), C. Jones (1)	7-1	1	+2
9	4/12	WAS	H	L	0-2	Smoltz (1-1)	--	7-2	1	+1
10	4/13	FLA	H	L	4-11	Redman (0-2)	C. Jones (2), Pena (1)	7-3	T-1	--
11	4/15	FLA	H	W	8-4	Hudson (2-0)	C. Jones (3), A. Jones (3)	8-3	1	+1
12	4/16	WAS	A	L	1-5	James (2-1)	--	8-4	1	+1/2
13	4/17	WAS	A	W	6-4	Smoltz (2-1)	C. Jones (4)	9-4	1	+1/2
14	4/18	CHI	H	W	8-6	Villarreal (1-0)	Francoeur (3), Thorman (2)	1	+1/2	
15	4/19	CHI	H	L	0-3	Redman (0-3)	--	10-5	2	-1/2
16	4/20	NYM	A	W	7-3	Hudson (3-0)	C. Jones (5)	11-5	1	+1/2
17	4/21	NYM	A	L	2-7	James (2-2)	--	11-6	2	-1/2
18	4/22	NYM	A	W	9-6	Yates (1-0)	Johnson 2 (4), Renteria (3)	12-6	1	+1/2
19	4/23	FLA	A	L	7-8	Davies (0-1)	Francoeur (4), C. Jones (6)	12-7	2	-1/2
20	4/24	FLA	A	W	11-6	Moylan (1-0)	--	13-7	2	-1/2
21	4/25	FLA	A	L	3-4	Wickman (1-1)	Johnson (5), C. Jones (7), Diaz (2)	13-8	2	-1/2
22	4/27	COL	A	W	9-7	James (3-2)	A. Jones (4), Wilson (1)	14-8	1	+1/2
23	4/28	COL	A	W	6-2	Smoltz (3-1)	Francoeur (5), Renteria (4)	15-8	1	+1/2
24	4/29	COL	A	L	7-9 (11)	Colyer (0-1)	Thorman (3)	15-9	2	-1/2
25	4/30	PHI	H	W	5-2	Gonzalez (1-0)	C. Jones (8), A. Jones (5)	16-9	1	+1/2
26	5/1	PHI	H	L	4-6	Redman (0-4)	C. Jones 2 (10)	16-10	1	+1/2
27	5/2	PHI	H	W	4-3	Paronto (1-0)	--	17-10	1	+1/2
28	5/4	LAD	H	W	4-0	Smoltz (4-1)	--	18-10	T-1	--
29	5/5	LAD	H	L	3-6	Hudson (3-1)	--	18-11	2	-1
30	5/6	LAD	H	W	6-4	Paronto (2-0)	--	19-11	T-1	--
31	5/7	SD	H	L	2-4	James (3-3)	--	19-12	T-1	--
32	5/8	SD	H	W	3-2	Gonzalez (2-0)	--	20-12	T-1	--
33	5/9	SD	H	W	3-2	Smoltz (5-1)	--	21-12	T-1	--
34	5/10	SD	H	W	5-3	Hudson (4-1)	--	22-12	1	+1/2
35	5/11	PIT	A	W	4-1	Davies (1-1)	A. Jones (6), Francoeur (6)	23-12	1	+1/2
36	5/12	PIT	A	W	9-2	James (4-3)	Thorman 2 (5)	24-12	1	+1 1/2
37	5/13	PIT	A	L	2-13	Lerew (0-1)	--	24-13	1	+1/2
38	5/14	WAS	A	L	1-2	Smoltz (5-2)	McCann (3)	24-14	2	-1/2
39	5/15	WAS	A	W	6-2	Hudson (5-1)	Renteria 2 (6)	25-14	1	+1/2
40	5/16	WAS	A	L	4-6	Davies (1-2)	--	25-15	2	-1/2
41	5/17	WAS	A	L	3-4	Paronto (2-1)	C. Jones (11)	25-16	2	-1 1/2
42	(1 of 2) 5/19	BOS	A	L	3-13	Lerew (0-2)	Francoeur (7)	25-17	2	-2 1/2
43	(2 of 2) 5/19	BOS	A	W	14-0	Smoltz (6-2)	C. Jones (12), Johnson (6), Diaz (3)	26-17	2	-2 1/2
44	5/20	BOS	A	L	3-6	Hudson (5-2)	--	26-18	2	-2 1/2
45	5/22	NYM	H	W	8-1	Davies (2-2)	Thorman (6), Davies (1)	27-18	2	-1 1/2
46	5/23	NYM	H	L	0-3	James (4-4)	--	27-19	2	-2 1/2
47	5/24	NYM	H	W	2-1	Smoltz (7-2)	Diaz (4)	28-19	2	-1 1/2
48	5/25	PHI	H	L	3-8	Hudson (5-3)	--	28-20	2	-2 1/2
49	5/26	PHI	H	L	4-6	Carlyle (0-1)	Renteria (7)	28-21	2	-3 1/2
50	5/27	PHI	H	L	6-13	Davies (2-3)	Saltalamacchia (1), A. Jones (7)	28-22	2	-4 1/2
51	5/28	MIL	A	W	2-1	James (5-4)	A. Jones (8)	29-22	2	-4
52	5/29	MIL	A	L	4-5	Moylan (1-1)	Harris (1)	29-23	2	-5
53	5/30	MIL	A	W	9-3	Hudson (6-3)	Johnson (7)	30-23	2	-4
54	6/1	CHI	A	W	8-5	Davies (3-3)	--	31-23	2	-3 1/2
55	6/2	CHI	A	W	5-3	Yates (2-0)	A. Jones (9)	32-23	2	-3 1/2
56	6/3	CHI	A	L	1-10	Cormier (0-1)	--	32-24	2	-3 1/2
57	6/4	FLA	H	L	4-6	Hudson (6-4)	Escobar (1), Renteria (8)	32-25	2	-4
58	(1 of 2) 6/5	FLA	H	W	3-1	Carlyle (1-1)	Saltalamacchia (2), Woodward (1)	33-25	2	-3 1/2
59	(2 of 2) 6/5	FLA	H	L	1-5	Smoltz (7-3)	--	33-26	2	-3 1/2
60	6/6	FLA	H	L	4-7	Davies (3-4)	--	33-27	2	-3 1/2
61	6/7	CHI	H	L	1-2	James (5-5)	A. Jones (10)	33-28	2	-3 1/2
62	6/8	CHI	H	L	1-9	Cormier (0-2)	--	33-29	2	-4 1/2
63	6/9	CHI	H	W	9-5	Moylan (2-1)	A. Jones (11), Renteria (9)	34-29	2	-3 1/2
64	6/10	CHI	H	W	5-4	Paronto (3-1)	Johnson (8)	35-29	2	-2 1/2
65	6/12	MIN	A	L	3-7	Davies (3-5)	Francoeur (8), Thorman (7)	35-30	2	-2
66	6/13	MIN	A	L	0-6	James (5-6)	--	35-31	2	-2
67	6/14	MIN	A	L	2-3	Wickman (1-2)	McCann (4)	35-32	3	-2 1/2

INDIVIDUAL STATS

Through June 13

BATTERS	AVG	SLG	OBP	G	AB	R	H	TB	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB	CS	E
Harris	.396	.525	.460	37	101	20	40	53	8	1	1	9	12	16	8	2	1
Diaz	.329	.450	.347	53	140	14	46	63	5	0	4	14	4	23	2	0	0
Saltalamacchia	.322	.475	.375	21	59	7	19	28	3	0	2	8	4	9	0	0	2
RIGHT	.346	.615	.346		26		9	16	1	0	2	4	0	7			
LEFT	.303	.364	.395		33		10	12	2	0	0	4	4	2			
Renteria	.320	.508	.381	62	244	43	78	124	17	1	9	33	23	40	4	1	5
Jones, C.	.311	.628	.400	43	164	33	51	103	14	1	12	27	25	28	0	0	4
RIGHT	.306	.653	.351		72		22	47	5	1	6	13	5	10			
LEFT	.315	.609	.434		92		29	56	9	0	6	14	20	18			
Escobar	.304	.435	.347	12	46	5	14	20	3	0	1	3	2	5	0	0	2
Johnson	.289	.485	.391	63	239	45	69	116	13	5	8	35	40	48	5	4	5
Francoeur	.282	.444	.331	66	259	30	73	115	18	0	8	45	17	49	1	1	3
McCann	.273	.406	.333	54	187	17	51	76	16	0	3	28	18	23	0	0	7
Thorman	.225	.396	.255	59	187	22	42	74	11	0	7	27	7	37	1	0	2
Jones, A.	.218	.424	.323	65	238	30	52	101	16	0	11	42	34	63	3	0	1
Woodward	.210	.296	.235	44	81	8	17	24	2	1	1	5	3	19	1	0	3
Orr	.200	.220	.231	35	50	6	10	11	1	0	0	2	2	10	0	0	1
ATLANTA	.266	.426	.333	66	2,254	300	599	961	134	9	70	288	216	456	25	9	44
OPPONENTS	.264	.413	.336	66	2,240	307	591	925	103	21	63	288	233	425	42	15	38

Totals include pitchers' hitting. *No longer in organization.

PINCH HITTERS (AVG-H-HR-RBI) **Harris** (.500-3-0-0), Diaz (.381-8-0-1), **Thorman** (.333-3-0-3), Orr (.263-5-0-2), **Woodward** (.130-3-1-3), Johnson (.000-0-0-0), **C. Jones** (.000-0-0-0), **McCann** (.000-0-0-0), **Renteria** (.000-0-0-0), **Saltalamacchia** (.000-0-0-1). **TEAM** (.193-16-3-11).

PITCHERS (AVG-H-HR-RBI) **Hudson** (.214-6-0-2), **Davies** (.211-4-1-4), **James** (.105-2-0-0), **Smoltz** (.091-2-0-0), **Cormier** (.000-0-0-0), Moylan (.000-0-0-0), **Villarreal** (.000-0-0-0), **Lerew** (.000-0-0-0), **Carlyle** (.000-0-0-0). **STAFF** (.139-14-1-6).

KEY: AVG-Batting average, SLG-Slugging percentage, OBP-One-base percentage, G-Games, AB-At-bats, R-Runs, H-Hits, 2B-Doubles, 3B-Triples, HR-Home runs, RBI-Runs batted in, BB-Walks, SO-Strikeouts, HP-Hit by pitch, SB-Stolen bases; CS-Caught stealing; E-Errors. W-L-Wins-Losses, ERA-Earned run average, OBA-Opponents' batting average, GS-Games started, CG-Complete games, GF-Games finished, SV-Saves, IP-Innings pitched, ER-Earned runs.

PITCHERS	W-L	ERA	OBA	G	GS	CG	GF	SV	IP	H	R	ER	HR	BB	SO
Gonzalez	2-0	1.59	.246	18	0	0	5	2	17	15	3	3	0	8	13
Soriano	1-0	2.25	.117	28	0	0	11	5	28	11	7	7	2	6	26
Moylan	2-1	2.31	.202	25	0	0	8	1	35	24	13	9	3	13	20
Wickman	1-1	2.53	.222	23	0	0	20	11	21.1	18	8	6	1	11	14
Smoltz	7-3	2.83	.253	13	13	0	0	0	82.2	81	28	26	8	19	69
Yates	2-0	3.45	.200	30	0	0	5	0	28.2	21	15	11	1	13	30
Hudson	6-4	3.51	.243	14	14	0	0	0	92.1	84	37	36	3	24	55
McBride	1-0	3.65	.240	15	0	0	2	0	12.1	12	8	5	1	13	13
Villarreal	1-0	4.09	.266	23	0	0	3	0	33	33	17	15	2	15	29
James	5-6	4.16	.287	14	14	0	0	0	75.2	85	36	35	12	31	56
Carlyle	1-1	4.91	.234	4	3	0	1	0	18.1	15	10	10	3	6	13
Davies	3-5	5.70	.274	12	12	0	0	0	66.1	71	46	42	10	31	42
Paronto	3-1	6.14	.349	25	0	0	7	1	22	30	17	15	1	11	8
Lerew	0-2	7.71	.298	3	3	0	0	0	11.2	14	10	10	4	7	9
Cormier	0-2	15.26	.400	2	2	0	0	0	7.2	14	13	13	7	7	4
ATLANTA	35-31	4.31	.264	66	66	0	66	20	548.2	591	307	280	63	233	425
OPPONENTS	31-35	4.18	.266	66	66	1	65	15	581.1	599	300	270	70	216	456

SECOND TO NONE

Former Infielder Jeff Treadway Coaches High School Team to State Championship

BY BRIAN KNAPP

JEFF TREADWAY stood on the dusty diamond at North Cobb Christian School in the Atlanta suburb of Kennesaw and caught his breath as 17 teenaged boys mobbed one another in mass celebration in front of him. The energy release was obvious for Treadway, the head coach at Stratford Academy, who directed the Macon school, located 85 miles southeast of Atlanta, to its first state championship in more than a decade. The long climb to the summit was over.

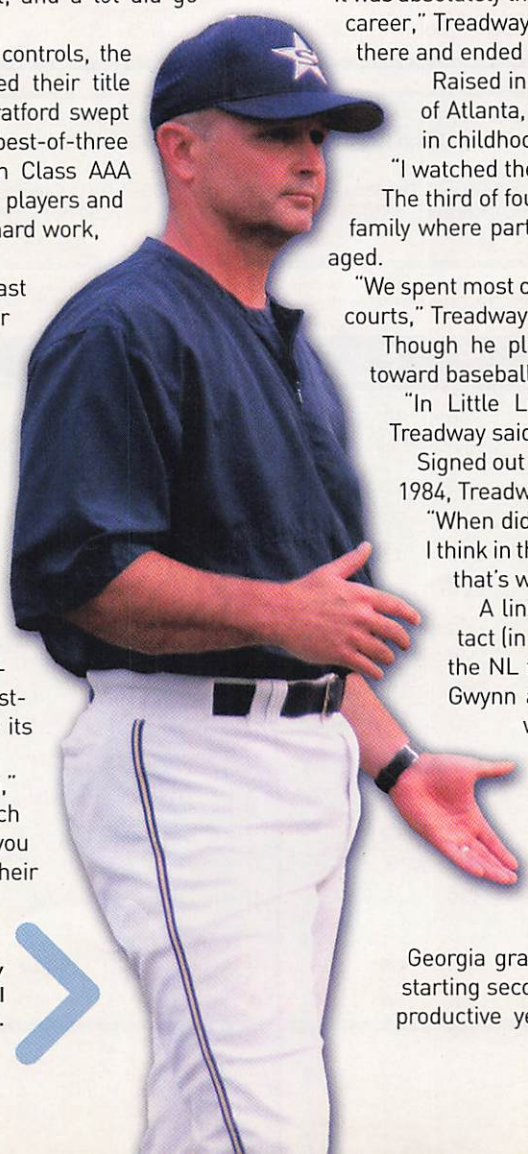
"Championships in sports – at any level – are fun," said Treadway, who spent four of his nine seasons in the major leagues with the Braves (1989-92). "We felt like we had a good chance when the season started, but it didn't mean it was going to happen. A lot has to go right, and a lot did go right."

With Treadway's steady hands at the controls, the Eagles posted a 27-4 record and closed their title march with 14 consecutive victories. Stratford swept North Cobb Christian, 7-1 and 3-2, in the best-of-three Georgia Independent School Association Class AAA state championship series May 11-12, as players and coaches reaped the rewards from their hard work, loyalty and dedication.

"It's what we've been working for the last four years," said senior pitcher Tyler Brown, who went 10-0 with a 1.05 earned run average in his final season. "Getting it done was very satisfying."

Through four years as head coach at Stratford – a private school with an enrollment of just under 1,000 students – Treadway's record stands at 69-34 (.670). His teams have enjoyed back-to-back 20-win seasons and state tournament appearances, re-establishing Stratford as a perennial power in the GISA's largest classification. The 44-year-old Treadway also coaches the girls' fast-pitch softball team, which was 10-13 in its fall 2006 schedule.

"You work with people you get to teach," Treadway said. "You not only get to teach them about baseball, but about things you hope they'll carry with them the rest of their lives. My experience is being passed on to the kids I'm working with."



Former Braves second baseman Jeff Treadway coaches baseball and girls fast-pitch softball at Stratford Academy in Macon, Ga.

Treadway's brief stint as an assistant evolved into an opportunity of far greater significance when former head coach Mark Farriba left his post to coach Stratford's football team in 2003. Treadway was a natural choice as his successor, and the school fit him like a trusty glove.

"There are a lot of great people here," Treadway said. "This is a special place."

Treadway had a wealth of experience on his side. He played for five teams (Reds, Braves, Indians, Dodgers and Expos) over his nine years in the big leagues. A .281 career hitter (.284 as a Brave), he played in consecutive World Series (1991-92) in his four years with the Braves. The lefty hitter was 4-for-11 (.364) in the post-season.

"It was absolutely the best of times – the best four years of my career," Treadway said. "We were not very good when I got there and ended up going to two World Series."

Raised in Griffin, Ga., a small town 40 miles south of Atlanta, Treadway's ties to the Braves are rooted in childhood.

"I watched the Braves as a kid," he said.

The third of four boys, Treadway grew up in a close-knit family where participation in sports was strongly encouraged.

"We spent most of our time at the ballfields and basketball courts," Treadway said. "That's what we did."

Though he played three sports, Treadway gravitated toward baseball at an early age.

"In Little League, I knew how much I loved it," Treadway said. "I loved to compete."

Signed out of a tryout camp by the Cincinnati Reds in 1984, Treadway began his climb to the major leagues.

"When did I believe I could play in the big leagues? I think in the minor leagues," Treadway said. "I think that's when I figured it out."

A line-drive hitter who made consistent contact (in 1989, he was the third-toughest player in the NL to strike out behind Hall of Famers Tony Gwynn and Ozzie Smith) and handled the glove well, he made quick headway and debuted for the Reds in 1987.

"I felt very fortunate to get the opportunity," Treadway said. "I signed out of a tryout camp, made the big leagues, and played nine years at that level."

Purchased from Cincinnati by Atlanta in March 1989, the University of Georgia graduate spent two seasons as the Braves' starting second baseman. Treadway enjoyed his most productive year in 1990, when he batted .283 with

career-highs in home runs (11) and runs batted in (59) for a team that lost 97 games. He hit three home runs against the Phillies on May 26, 1990, at Veterans Stadium. For a player who would hit only 28 home runs in his entire career, the night was quite memorable.

"That was the night they retired (Phillies Hall of Fame third baseman) Mike Schmidt's number," Treadway said. "I still get people who come up and talk to me about that. I just remember how surprised I was. I never would have dreamed I'd hit three home runs in a game."

Injuries and the arrival of a spunky second baseman from Utica, N.Y., named Mark Lemke cut into Treadway's playing time, though he hit .320 in a part-time role for the Braves in 1991. Atlanta released him following the 1992 season, and at age 29, he was out of a job.

"I was very upset," Treadway said. "Obviously, nobody likes to get fired. It's a tough thing to take emotionally, and it takes a lot of will power to rebound from something like that. I worked very hard to revive my career."

Treadway signed a free-agent deal with the Indians and went on to play for the Dodgers and Expos before retiring in 1995.

"I'd gotten older," Treadway said. "I felt like it was the right time to step down."

He dabbled in construction and real estate for three years and put himself "in a pretty good financial situation" before returning to baseball in 1998 as a coach for the Pittsburgh Pirates' Class-A affiliate in Augusta, Ga. He went on to manage for two years in the Braves organization (Class A Macon in 1999-2000) but declined an offer to serve as hitting instructor for their Triple-A team in Richmond.

"I had two kids I wanted to see grow up," Treadway said. "I'm thankful I had enough wisdom to make that decision."

Married to his second wife, Mollye, for three years, Treadway resides in Forsyth, Ga., with his 18-year-old son, Ben, and two stepdaughters – Alexis, 10, and Grace, 8. His 16-year-old daughter, Alden, lives with her mother in Peachtree City. Though Treadway is content with his current position at Stratford Academy, he's not ruling out a potential return to the major leagues or college ranks.

"It would have to be a great situation," Treadway said. "I'm happy where I am, but I can't tell you I haven't thought about sitting on the bench in the big leagues somewhere someday."

HOW I MADE IT TO THE MAJORS

JOHN STOSSEL
STATS REPORTER

ALLISON SHIRREFFS

BY STEVE FALL

WHEN JOHN Stossel first learned of a part-time job opportunity with STATS in 1989, he wasn't sure what to make of it.

"I thought it was a scam deal," said Stossel, who had never heard of STATS at the time. "There was an ad in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution that said I'd be able to attend baseball games free and get paid for it."

Stossel has electronically scored Braves home games every year since then. From his seat in the Turner Field press box, he captures every pitch and play that takes place. He records how the ball was hit – line drive, flyball, groundball – and how far it travels.

STATS, which bills itself as "the leading global provider of sports information and statistical analysis," divides the playing field into 26 sections, and the scorers indicate where the ball lands or gets caught. So, if someone wants to know what percentage of line drives Andruw Jones chases down in short right-center, they have the answer.

The information from Stossel's laptop computer gets fed to the STATS headquarters in Morton Grove, Ill. There it gets compared to information from two backup scorers working the same game, and merged with data from every other major league game. The efforts by the STATS reporters create an unbelievably detailed statistical database. Teams, television networks, sportswriters, and other baseball insiders find the information invaluable.

Stossel works about 50-55 home games each season. He usually arrives a couple of hours before the first pitch. He inputs all the lineups, the probable pitchers for upcoming games, injuries, as well as any transactions that may have taken place.

"It's given me an opportunity to do what I've always wanted – to be part of Major League Baseball," said the 68-year-old Stossel. "Maybe I'm not on the field, but at least I'm participating in the game."

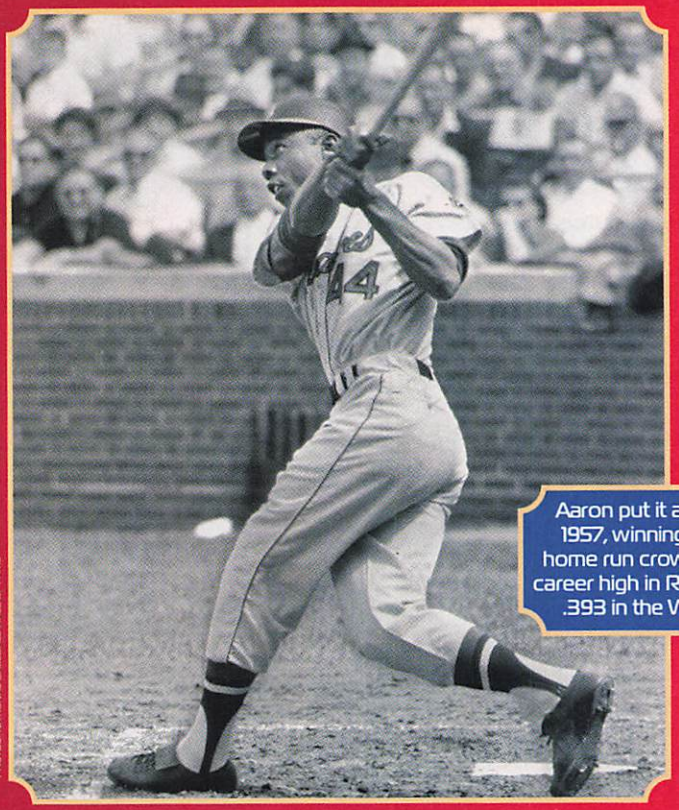
Raised as a huge baseball fan in a small Western Pennsylvania town called Barnesboro, Stossel followed a baseball odyssey that took him from Los Angeles to Germany. Once a right-handed pitcher whose fastball reached over 90 miles per hour, he drew looks from big league scouts until an elbow injury robbed much of his velocity.

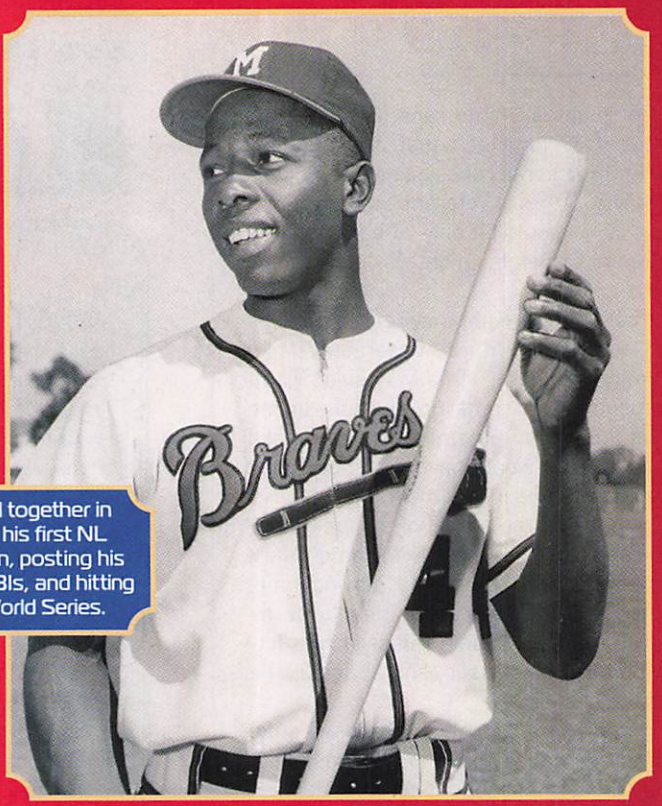
He pitched in 1960 for the University of Southern California, then among the nation's elite college baseball programs, before transferring back to Carnegie Tech (now Carnegie Mellon University) in Pittsburgh. Stossel later pitched in Germany while performing military service.

Stossel moved to Atlanta in 1981. He worked as the general manager of Unisys Corporation's financial software development center until retiring in 2001. Afterwards, he began covering more Braves games.

Landing a position with STATS isn't that difficult (visit STATS.com), but requires some prior experience keeping score.

"After they get that basic knowledge, they could contact STATS headquarters," said Stossel. "MLB.com has its own situation. So they could contact them, also."





Aaron put it all together in 1957, winning his first NL home run crown, posting his career high in RBIs, and hitting .393 in the World Series.

PHOTOS: NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME

THE GREATEST SEASON

Long Before He Was the Home Run King, Hank Aaron Was the 1957 MVP

BY GARY CARUSO

NOT ONLY WAS 1957 the greatest season in Milwaukee Braves history, but it can be argued that it also was the greatest season in the remarkable career of Henry Louis Aaron. With his days as the All-Time Home Run King apparently numbered and the 1957 World Championship reunion at hand, it's a very appropriate time to revisit that season.

On many occasions, Aaron has said that the biggest home run he hit in his 23-year career was not No. 715 to break Babe Ruth's record, nor No. 755, his last. Rather it was No. 109. It came on Sept. 23, 1957, in the bottom of the 11th inning and today would be ballyhooed as a "walk-off" homer. Back then, it just was the home run that gave the Braves the National League pennant and a berth in the World Series against the Yankees.

The Braves and Cardinals were tied, 2-2, at Milwaukee County Stadium against St. Louis righthander Billy Muffett when Johnny Logan reached on a one-out single in the 11th. After Eddie Mathews flied out to center, Aaron hit a long home run to center to send the Braves to the Series for the first time since 1948 when they called Boston home.

This year marks the 50th Anniversary of the Milwaukee Braves' 1957 World Series championship. Throughout the year, ChopTalk will revisit one of the most-glorious accomplishments in franchise history with a series of stories about the people and highlights of this storied chapter in Braves history.

That home run and its significance put the icing on the cake for Aaron in the only MVP season of his career. He narrowly beat Cardinals legend Stan Musial for the 1957 NL MVP, receiving 239 points in the voting to 230 for Musial.

Among other accomplishments that year, Aaron led the majors with 132 runs batted in. That was the highest total of his career and was a whopping 27 more than runnerup Del Ennis of St. Louis. Washington's Roy Sievers had the most (114) in the American League.

Aaron won the first of his four home run titles in 1957 by matching his uniform number with 44. That was one more than runnerup Ernie Banks of the Cubs.

Only a third-place finish in the batting race - which he won the previous year - kept Aaron from a Triple Crown season. His .322 batting average tied Frank Robinson for third place, behind Musial (.351) and Willie Mays (.333). Aaron also led the NL in runs (118).

One of the most unique and seldom remembered aspects of the '57 season for Aaron is the fact that he spent nearly half the year (69 starts) in center field due to the mid-season injury to regular Billy Bruton. The distraction and added defensive responsibil-

ity certainly did not have a negative impact on his hitting.

Aaron, of course, made the NL All-Star team that year. Even though it was just his forth season in the majors, it was his third All-Star selection. However, he made the starting lineup under the most unusual of circumstances.

The rabid fans in Cincinnati blatantly stuffed the ballot boxes, resulting in all eight starting positions being won by Redlegs players. Commissioner Ford Frick stepped in to name Aaron, Musial and Mays to replace Gus Bell, George Crowe and Wally Post.

A month before his pennant-clinching home run, Aaron hit the first of his 16 career grand slams Aug. 24 in a 13-7 rout of the Dodgers, who used eight pitchers to tie an NL record.

Aaron continued his torrid hitting in the World Series, though Lou Burdette stole the spotlight with three complete-game wins that earned him the Series MVP award. The Hammer hammered the Yankees to the tune of a .393 average (11-for-28) with a triple, three home runs and seven RBIs and a .786 slugging percentage. He was easily the hitting star of the Series.

There certainly was a lot more to come from Aaron after 1957, but in many ways, it was the best season he ever produced on a number of fronts.

AARON, SELIG IN THE LINEUP FOR 1957 REUNION

AFTER A 50-YEAR RAIN DELAY, the 1957 Milwaukee Braves are going back on the field for one final inning. Well, maybe not on the field, but near it.

On August 30, most of the 22 living members of that World Championship ballclub will gather in Milwaukee to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the greatest baseball season and the greatest baseball team in Wisconsin history.

The highlight of the festivities will be a gala dinner at the Potawatomi Casino, located a short distance from Miller Park. Each Brave who played a part in winning the 1957 pennant, whether living or deceased, will be honored. Each of the attending ballplayers will speak to the gathering, as will Commissioner of Baseball Allan H. "Bud" Selig.

The master of ceremonies will be legendary Milwaukee radio personality Bob Barry, a member of the Wisconsin Broadcasting Hall of Fame who, in the 1960s, acquired the nickname "The Fifth Beatle" for introducing Liverpool's Fab Four at their Milwaukee concert.

The dinner is a sellout, but Braves fans may still catch a glimpse of their heroes at a free ceremony at the Milwaukee Braves Historical Association monument on the site of old County Stadium, beginning at about 5 p.m. (Central). Details are still in the planning stage, but tentatively the ceremony will be followed by a procession of golf carts shuttling the ballplayers from the monument to the casino.

A cocktail hour with the former Braves and dinner-goers will precede the banquet. In addition, each ticket holder will receive a keepsake black leather-sleeved jacket with a Braves 50th anniversary emblem.

The list of players who will participate includes five members of the starting lineup from Game 7 of the 1957 World Series in which Milwaukee beat the Yankees, 5-0: Johnny Logan, Henry Aaron, Wes Covington, Felix Mantilla and Del Crandall.

Other Braves expected to attend are Gene Conley, Ray Crone, John DeMerit, Ernie Johnson, Andy Pafko, Taylor Phillips, Juan Pizarro, Chuck Tanner, Hawk Taylor, Carl Willey and Red Schoendienst.

- BOB BUEGE

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ALUMNI NOTES

Clete Boyer, a key member of the 1969 division-winning Atlanta Braves, died June 4 at age 70 in Atlanta. Boyer is best known for his role as the third baseman on five World Champion Yankees teams (1960-64). Braves fans, however, remember his sensational fielding at third and clutch hitting that helped Atlanta win its first title in the South. He hit .250 with 14 home runs and 57 RBIs in 1969 and led NL third basemen with a .965 fielding percentage.

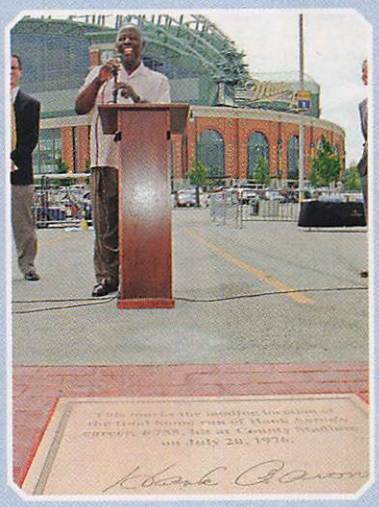
Boyer spent the last five seasons (1967-71) of a 16-year big league career with the Braves. In 1967, after the Braves acquired him from the Yankees for **Bill Robinson** and **Chi-Chi Olivo**, he posted career highs in home runs (26) and RBIs (96). Boyer's brother, **Cloyd**, was a member of **Bobby Cox**'s first Braves coaching staff (1978-81), and another brother, Ken, was a seven-time All-Star and 1964 NL MVP with the Cardinals.

Officials in Bridgeport, Ohio, were scheduled to unveil a large monument of the **Niekro** brothers - **Phil** (RHP, 1964-83, '87) and **Joe** (RHP, 1973-74) - on June 22 at the Bridgeport High baseball field, formerly known as Perkins Field but renamed Niekro Diamond at the ceremony. It's the field where the brothers often played when growing up.

Phil graduated from Bridgeport in 1957, and Joe in 1962, and they are regarded as the school's greatest ambassadors, as well as the winningest set of brothers in major league history (539 total - 318 for Phil and 221 for Joe). Joe died in November, and a memorial dinner for him was scheduled June 21 at Belmont Hills Country Club, where a golf tournament will be played June 22 to benefit the school.

The monument will include bust etchings of both Niekros and contain biographical information. It will be shaped like a diamond and be mounted in the backstop area of the field.

A plaque marking the landing spot of **Hank Aaron**'s 755th - and last - home run was unveiled June 7 outside



DARREN HAUCK/MILWAUKEE BREWERS

Miller Park in Milwaukee where County Stadium once stood. At the ceremony (above), Aaron was presented with a replica of the plaque by Rick Schlesinger, Brewers executive vice president of business operations.

Aaron hit the home run on July 20, 1976, and the Brewers asked Dr. Alan Horowitz, an engineering professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and three students to pinpoint the landing by watching video of the event. They used diagrams of the stadium and GPS equipment to mark the spot at 363 feet from home plate, where the plaque is mounted in what is now Brewers parking lot 1.

Dale Murphy (OF/1B/C, 1976-90) is scheduled to be the keynote speaker at the American Legion World Series (ALWS) banquet in Bartlesville, Okla., on Aug. 23. Tickets for the banquet may be purchased at the Bartlesville Community Center box office for $30 each.

Murphy also signed autographs at the 10th Annual SportsFest sports and entertainment collectibles show June 8-10, at the Renaissance Schaumburg Hotel & Convention Center in Chicago. On May 29, Murphy appeared at American Fork (Utah) High School to give a presentation to about avoiding steroids.

Andy Pafko (OF, 1953-59) signed autographs May 31 at Jim & Steve's Sportscards in Waukegan.

BIRTHDAYS

JULY

2ND	TIM SPEHR (41)
3RD	LARRY WHISENTON (51)
	DANNY HEEP (50)
	DAN MEYER (26)
4TH	CHUCK TANNER (78)
	BOBBY MALKMUS (76)
	VINNY CASTILLA (40)
5TH	GARY MATTHEWS (57)
6TH	MARTY MALLOY (35)
7TH	CHUCK GOGGIN (62)
	RICK KESTER (61)
	LEN BARKER (52)
8TH	GENE PATTON (81)
	AL SPANGLER (74)
	JEROME WALTON (42)
9TH	SONNY JACKSON (63)
	GEORGE STONE (61)
10TH	HARRY MACPHERSON (81)
11TH	JOEY MCLAUGHLIN (51)
	ANDY ASHBY (40)
	BLAINE BOYER (26)
12TH	MIKE PAGE (67)
13TH	JACK AKER (67)
	ROB BELLOIR (59)
14TH	PEPE FRIAS (59)
	EARL WILLIAMS (59)
	JOSE HERNANDEZ (38)
	TIM HUDSON (32)
15TH	JUNG KEUN BONG (27)
16TH	ART JOHNSON (91)
	TERRY PENDLETON (47)
	JORGE VASQUEZ (39)
18TH	JOE TORRE (67)
21ST	DENIS MENKE (67)
	AL HRABOSKY (58)
22ND	BOB PORTER (48)
	GARY EAVE (44)
23RD	VIRGIL JESTER (80)
24TH	CLINT CONATSER (86)
	ETHAN BLACKABY (67)
25TH	BIFF POCOROBA (54)
26TH	PETE WARD (68)
	GREG COLBRUNN (38)
27TH	JOHN EDELMAN (72)
28TH	JERRY MADDOX (54)
	WILSON BETEMIT (27)
	CHAD PARONTO (32)
29TH	FELIX MANTILLA (73)
	TOMMY GREGG (44)
	SETH GREISINGER (32)
30TH	MICKEY MAHLER (55)
31ST	TERRY FOX (72)
	HANK SMALL (54)
	MIKE BIELECKI (48)

ChopTalk
THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE ATLANTA BRAVES

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BOOKS 'N' THINGS

THE FOURTH OF JULY usually is reserved for hot dogs, flag flying and baseball. This year, you need to add something to that mix. That something is the most-unique look at the history of Atlanta Braves baseball that you'll ever find.

See the ad on page 15 of this issue of ChopTalk to learn how to buy Walter Victor's long-anticipated book titled "Brave at Heart." There may not be a better way for a Braves fan to spend $24.95 - and it's a true bargain.

You've read about Victor from time to time in ChopTalk and seen a few of the thousands of photographs he's snapped in 40 years as the Braves' official photographer. You've heard the broadcasters mention him, and you've probably seen some of his pictures at Turner Field and in other Braves publications. But "Brave at Heart" brings it all together... and then some.

It's 176 pages (Indigo Publishing) filled with incredible images of some of the great moments in Braves history, as well as pictures of people and events that say "Atlanta Braves" in a way you simply can't find anywhere else.

Where else are you going to come across Ted Turner showing off a bloodied face from pushing a baseball around the bases with his nose? Where else are you going to see Chief Noc-a-Homa blowing fire from his mouth?

There are scenes from the unbelievable 1984 brawl between the Braves and Padres at Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium. This wasn't your typical baseball fight. Unfortunately, this was a *real* brawl.

There also are shots of the fire at the old stadium... pictures of all your favorite players, of course... special events at the ballpark... celebrities... even a sampling of Victor's work at other Atlanta sports events.

Furman Bisher, the noted columnist of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, wrote the foreword, and Bobby Cox supplied the afterword.

But perhaps best of all, the book also provides fans the great opportunity to get to know Victor - who turns 90 on July 1, just as this book becomes available. The words of writer Anne Jones and photos from Victor's personal album provide a synopsis of his pre-Braves life, from the son of Polish immigrants to his distinguished and decorated service with the U.S. Army in World War II.

Braves fans are sure to cherish "Brave at Heart - The Life and Lens of Walter Victor." It's the type of book you'll display on your coffee table for years to come.

ANOTHER VERY WORTHY READ for Braves fans is Jack Wilkinson's "Game of My Life" (Sports Publishing, 216 pages, $24.95). The long-time Atlanta Journal-Constitution writer replays memorable moments in the careers of 18 of the best-known Atlanta Braves, from David Justice to Dale Murphy, and adds two more chapters with tales from Skip Caray and Pete Van Wieren.

THE ALL-STAR GAME will be played in San Francisco later this month, and there's plenty of speculation about which players will be chosen to represent their leagues. One name that never gets mentioned is Rafael Soriano. But if there's an All-Star on the Braves - as there surely is - Soriano is as deserving as anyone else. That's saying something, especially considering the type of year Edgar Renteria is having. And much the same goes for John Smoltz, with Tim Hudson in the hunt, as well.

But is anyone doing his job better than Soriano? It's hard to imagine. The problem is that his job is mainly as a setup man, and relievers who aren't closers don't get All-Star recognition.

PARTING THOUGHTS: Though the Braves' starting pitching lacks depth, Andruw is in a deep funk, and Chipper has been hurt, the club is just a game and a half behind the Mets at this writing. Stay tuned...

With every passing day, 14 straight division titles becomes more and more unbelievable...

The youth movement just keeps getting better and better, doesn't it? Jarrod Saltalamacchia and Yunel Escobar!

THIS ISSUE OF CHOPTALK was mailed June 22. The August issue will be mailed July 20.

BEYOND BASEBALL

BY **PATTY RASMUSSEN**

Composer Richard Danielpour (R) presents Hank Aaron with a framed copy of the title page of "Pastime" as Billye Aaron and Atlanta Symphony Orchestra musical director Robert Spano (L) look on.

SLUGGER'S *Symphony*

CHARLIE WADE

THE STORY of the Negro Leagues, **Jackie Robinson** breaking the color barrier, and the power and grace of All-Time Home Run King **Hank Aaron** are told in "Pastime," a symphony composed by **Richard Danielpour** that received its Atlanta premiere at a series of concerts performed by the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (ASO), May 31 and June 2-3.

Aaron and his wife, **Billye**, attended the May 31 performance and were enthusiastically acknowledged by the audience, the composer, and ASO musical director, **Robert Spano**. The symphony was a labor of love for Danielpour, who had a personal connection to Aaron (Mar. '06 CT). As an 11-year-old boy living in West Palm Beach, Fla., he served as a ball boy for the Braves during spring training from 1969-71.

"(Aaron) had been such an important role model for me as a kid," said Danielpour. "This was a small way of thanking him for that."

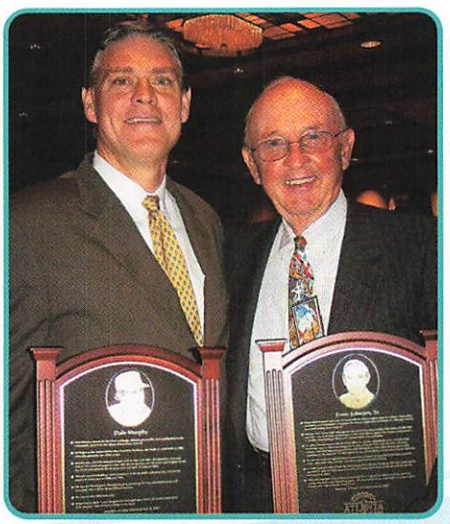
An emotional reunion followed the performance when Danielpour presented Aaron with a framed copy of the title page of "Pastime" and a photograph of the two of them sitting together in a dugout over 30 years ago.

"As a kid, I was always asking him to sign bats or balls," recalled Danielpour. "This time, he was asking for my signature on his granddaughter's program! If the reason we do the things we do is to bring people together, it was achieved that night. It was an extraordinary week in Atlanta."

Andrew Young, the former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations and close friend of Aaron's, also attended the premiere.

BRAVES HALL OF FAMERS **Ernie Johnson** and **Dale Murphy** were inducted into the Atlanta Sports Hall of Fame at a ceremony on June 8 at the Emory Conference Center. Murphy was introduced by Hall of Famer **Phil Niekro**, his friend and former teammate, who reminisced about the days Murphy spent as his catcher. Niekro called Murphy the "finest and greatest guy that I've known in the game of baseball." Murphy told the audience that Niekro would have gotten to 300 wins a lot faster if he hadn't been catching!

"We (wife **Nancy**) love it whenever we get to come back to Atlanta," said Murphy, who spent 15 seasons with the Braves (1976-90) and now lives in Utah. "The heat and humidity... this afternoon we had a thundershower and we got to eat cheese grits! It just feels like home."



PATTY RASMUSSEN

Two all-time Braves greats, Dale Murphy and Ernie Johnson, get together at their induction into the Atlanta Sports Hall of Fame.

Ernie Johnson Jr., an Emmy award-winning broadcaster with TNT, introduced his father, a former Braves pitcher (1950, '52-58) and announcer. Ernie Jr. led off his remarks by saying his father's first pre-game interview was with **Abner Doubleday**! Ernie spoke of his father's friendliness, not just to the big names in the game, but also to the fans that called to him from the seats at the stadium. "I would say, 'Wow, that's my dad,'" recalled Ernie. "Tonight I say, 'Wow, that's my dad.'"

It's a big year for the Johnsons (wife, **Lois**). They will return to Milwaukee in August for the 50th anniversary of the 1957 Milwaukee Braves World Championship team and also celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary in November...

Kelly Johnson became engaged to **Lauren Thacker** on May 21. The couple enjoyed a meal at one of their favorite restaurants and then returned to Johnson's home where he popped the big question. They are looking at a January 2008 wedding date...

John Smoltz asked for and received permission to leave the team in Boston on May 18 in order to be one of the Baccalaureate speakers for the first graduating class at King's Ridge Christian School, in the Atlanta suburb of Alpharetta. One of the school's

SPECIAL

Kim Hudson (R) with Pam Mecir, wife of former big league pitcher Jim Mecir, on their outing in Los Angeles.

founders, Smoltz originally planned to be the graduation speaker but his scheduled turn in the rotation fell on the May 19 graduation day. Just six seniors graduated, but it was a cause for celebration for the school, which used to be housed in a former grocery store. "Four of the six students had been there from the beginning of the school," said Smoltz. "They came to the board to ask us if they could stay at the school to graduate. It didn't make financial sense, but it laid the groundwork for what the school has become today." Smoltz said of the baccalaureate, "It was one of the greatest nights of my life. I told the students that you always remember your first win, and we would always remember the first King's Ridge graduation."...

Yunel Escobar's wife, **Minerva**, was seated in the stands at Turner Field when her husband hit his first major league home run June 4 against the Marlins. As he crossed home plate, Escobar kissed his fingertips and pointed into the stands where Minerva was cheering, laughing and crying at the same time. She immediately began receiving phone calls from friends and family.

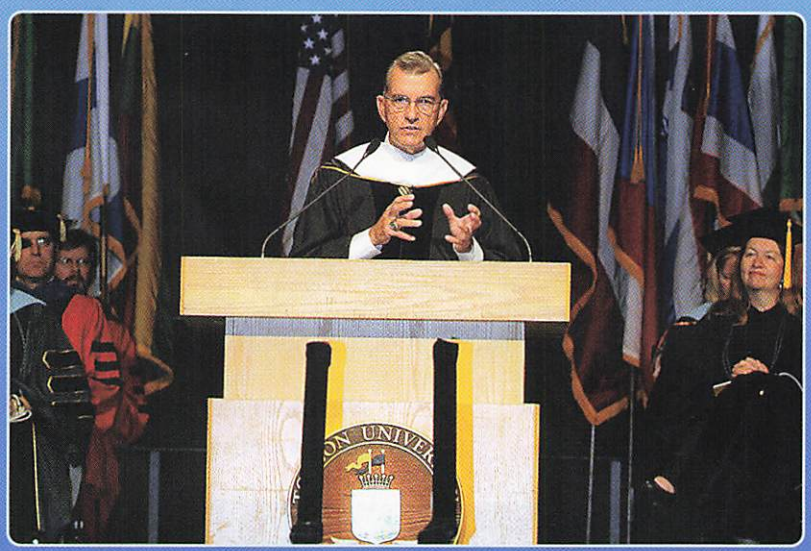
Though not in attendance that evening, Escobar's father, **Mariano**, and 10-year-old sister, **Yunay**, arrived in Atlanta the next day for the remainder of the series against the Marlins and the first game against the Cubs. Escobar defected from his native Cuba in 2003 by traveling to Florida on an overloaded fishing boat. After obtaining asylum in the U.S., he was able to get his father and sister out of Cuba but has been unable to get his mother, **Mariluz**, out. The family lives in Miami near Escobar's good friend, fellow Cuban exile and fellow Brave, **Brayan Pena**...

Jarrod Saltalamacchia and his wife, **Ashley**, are expecting their second child in December. Their daughter, **Sidney**, will turn one year old at around the same time...

Tim Hudson was photographed prior to batting practice in the Braves dugout reading a copy of "Legends, Demons, and Dreams", the collection of short stories by senior baseball advisor **Bobby Dews**. The photo is part of a literacy campaign promoted by the Alabama Department of Education. Dews' book was recently released in paperback by Literati Press...

Kim Hudson went to Los Angeles and met her friend, **Pam Mecir**, wife of former A's teammate **Jim Mecir**, for the finale of American Idol. "We used to watch the show together in Oakland," said Kim. At a charity event last November, Kim won a trip to L.A. for the last two shows of Idol, as well as first-class travel accommodations, including two nights at The Peninsula Beverly Hills. "The show was great, but the hotel was fantastic," said Kim. In between sitting by the pool and star-gazing at the show and finale, Kim and Pam visited a number of popular restaurants. including The Ivy...

The May 31 off day in Chicago provided Braves personnel and broadcasters with time to relax with family and friends. The **Tim Hudson**s, including **Kim** and three kids **Kennedie**, **Tess**, and **Kade**, spent the day at the home of their friends, **Jim** and **Pam Mecir**... **Joe Simpson** played golf at the famed Butler National Golf Club with head trainer **Jeff "Bubba" Porter**, and former radio producer **Dave Baker**.



TOWSON UNIVERSITY

DR. SCHUERHOLZ

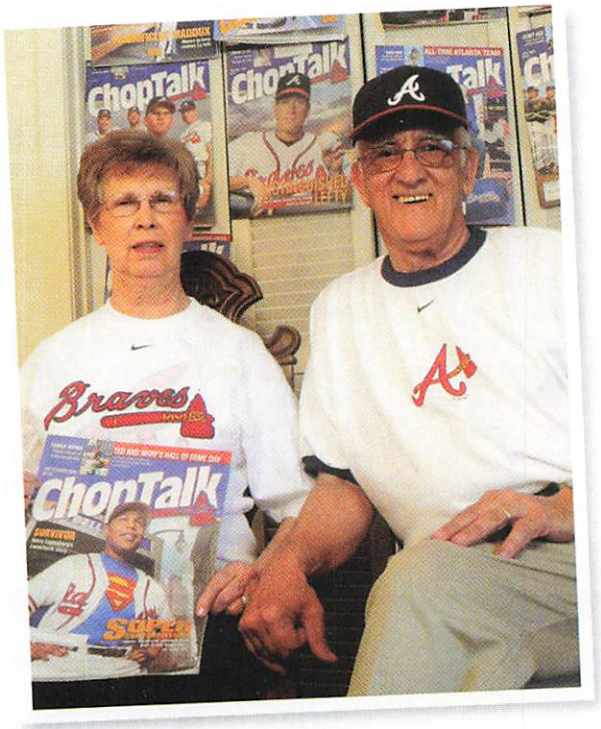
JOHN SCHUERHOLZ returned to his alma mater, Towson University (Md.), on May 24 to receive an honorary doctorate and to speak to the graduates of the College of Education. "I felt a great deal of pride in earning my degree in education from Towson and in having taught (school), and I shared that with the graduates," said Schuerholz. "It was a very proud day."

In an interesting baseball connection, earlier in the month, May 3, Schuerholz was honored as a Towson Distinguished Alumnus at the same event where **Shonda Schilling**, wife of Red Sox pitcher **Curt Schilling**, received the same recognition. Shonda graduated from Towson in 1991 and was honored for her work educating people about the dangers of skin cancer.

TALKIN' CHOP

LETTERS & PHOTOS FROM OUR READERS

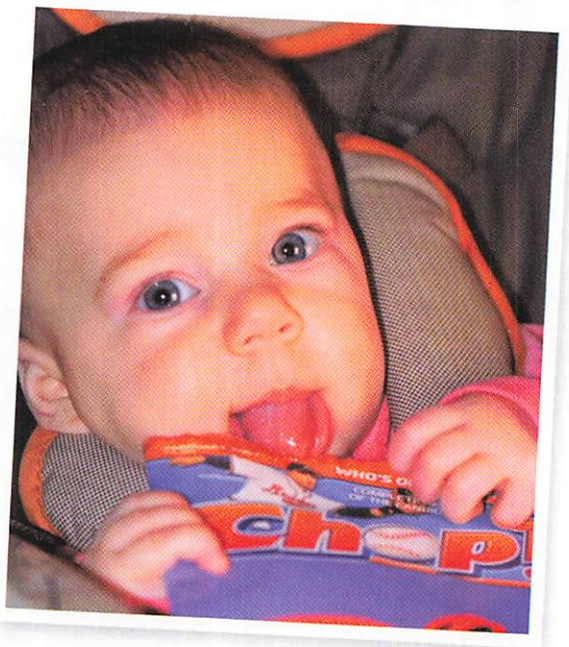
WHETHER YOU'RE HAVING FUN AT TURNER FIELD, EXPERIENCING A CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH YOUR FAVORITE BRAVES PLAYER, OR JUST SHOWING OFF YOUR COLLECTION OF BRAVES STUFF OR TRYING ON YOUR NEW BRAVES SHIRT, WE WANT TO HEAR ABOUT IT AND SEE A PICTURE.



FOREVER BRAVE

We have been Braves fans "forever" and have subscribed to ChopTalk for more than 10 years. We look forward to receiving it and love reading about the Braves and their families. The team and everyone involved with it are special to us - especially Andruw Jones. We do love him and hope he does not leave the Braves when he becomes a free agent. It's always sad to lose any of the players. This picture of me and my husband was taken on May 1, his 74th birthday.

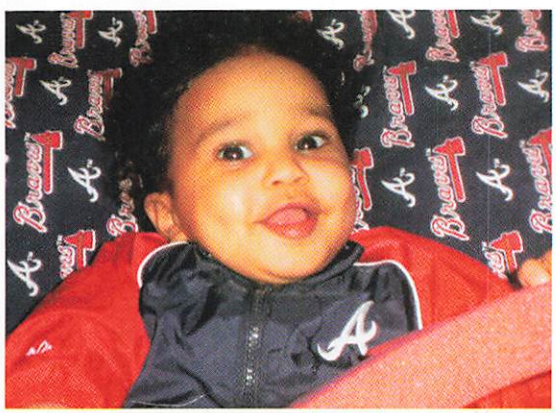
LOUISE & RUEL MURKS
Florence, Ala.



COACH'S PET PROJECT

My husband, Kent Willis, is a minor league pitching coordinator in the Atlanta Braves organization. We receive ChopTalk monthly and would be very honored to have our nine-month-old grandson (Cameron Cario Armstrong) pictured in the magazine showing off his Braves collection and ready to attend a Mississippi Braves game.

SHEILA WILLIS
Jackson, Miss.



WORTH WRITING ABOUT

We have been reading ChopTalk for many years and have enjoyed the letters from Braves fans everywhere. But we never had anything worth writing about until now. Our Little Ruthie was born too late to attend any games last season, but now she's ready for her first taste of the Braves. If she's anything like us, she'll enjoy every issue of ChopTalk.

LECRETIA & GEORGE SCONDRAS
Dawsonville, Ga.

CHOPTALK AND THE ATLANTA BRAVES SUPPORT OUR TROOPS

A NEW BABY BRAVE

Here I am with my dad, Dean Anason, for my first cup of coffee in the majors at Turner Field. It was the last game of last season, but it gave me a taste of the bigs. I worked hard all winter and got bigger, stronger and faster. I'm hopin' Bobby will make me the newest Baby Brave this year!

NORA ANASON
Atlanta

BONDED IN INDIANA

I'm a high school guidance counselor, and one of my students was Erika Kroening, a 2006 graduating senior at James Whitcomb Riley High School in South Bend, Indiana. Ericka and I are both gigantic Braves fans. She's been one of my favorite students because we have our love of the Braves in common. We've seen them play in Milwaukee and Chicago. Ericka was able to see the Braves play at Wrigley Field last May, and she saw them play the Marlins in Florida after graduation. My husband, Paul, and I flew to Atlanta for four games last July. I can't wait to share pictures from my trip with Ericka.

JUDY HUMS
Mishawaka, Ind.

SHARE YOUR BRAVES FEVER!

WRITE TO US

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WRITE THE BRAVES

Atlanta Braves
P.O. Box 4064
Atlanta, Ga. 30302

For the Braves players, Bobby Cox, the coaches, broadcasters, or members of the front office.

If you request a response, be sure to include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Never send anything of value that you want returned. This is no guarantee of a reply.

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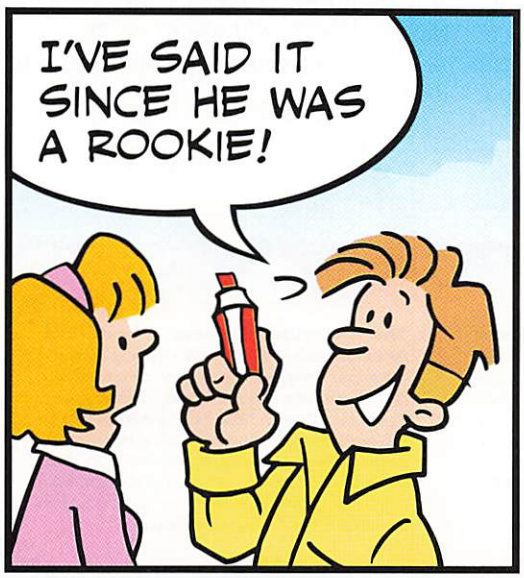

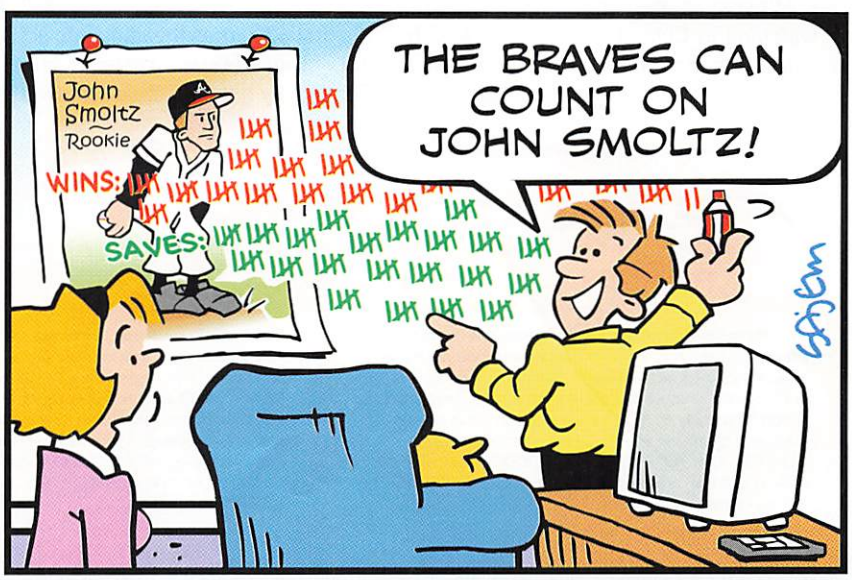

ESCOBAR'S WILD RIDE TO THE BIG TIME

JON COOPER

YUNEL ESCOBAR'S journey to the majors has been a dangerous one.

The 24-year-old native of Havana, Cuba, a second-round selection of the Braves in the 2005 draft (75th overall), left his family and risked his life to come to America by boat at age 20.

But that wasn't the only harrowing experience Escobar had on his way to the big leagues.

On June 2, he was called up from Richmond to fill the roster spot when Chipper Jones went on the disabled list. While he avoided one potential travel nightmare — he wouldn't have been able to travel out of the country to Ottawa with the R-Braves because of visa issues and was instead supposed to join the Mississippi Braves in Chattanooga — Escobar encountered more trouble trying to get to Chicago, where he was to join the Braves.

"There was bad weather," the infielder said through an interpreter. "Since I didn't really speak a lot of English, I was on the plane and I heard people yelling, 'Oh, my God!' When we landed, I thought we were in Chicago, but we were really in Indiana. We had stopped because of bad weather, so I didn't really know where I was at all!"

Escobar's had little navigational trouble since. After arriving safely in Chicago, he went 2-for-4 in his debut, including driving in the winning run in the Braves' 5-3 victory. Two days later at Turner Field, with his wife, Minerva, in attendance and his mother watching in Cuba, he went 4-for-4 with his first career homer against Florida (Marlins games are televised in Cuba).

ALISON SHRIEFFS

Yunel Escobar took a little "side trip" to Indiana on his way to join the Braves at Wrigley Field.

KELLY'S PATIENCE

Kelly Johnson loves to talk about hitting. It's thinking about it that he doesn't like.

"If you over-think, you'll talk yourself into changing when you don't need to," said the leadoff man, who was hitting .289 through his first 63 games (heading into action June 14). "There are all sorts of little things. That's why hitters get so stressed out. You can talk yourself out of being a really good hitter really quick."

A .241 hitter in his rookie season of 2005 (he missed all of 2006 after undergoing elbow surgery), Johnson has become the answer for the Braves in the leadoff spot really quickly, sporting a .392 on-base percentage, seventh-best in the majors. He's reached base in 55 of his first 58 starts.

"Confidence is a big thing because when you have confidence, you tell yourself, 'I'm going to get a pitch to hit here, and I'm going to hit it hard,'" he said. "When you're convinced of that and are confident of it, that's when guys hit streaks and get going really well."

Johnson has matched his career-long hitting streak of 11 games (April 24-May 6) and become one of the game's most patient hitters, averaging 4.09 pitches per plate appearance (seventh in the majors).

However, Johnson says that kind of patience can be detrimental in clutch situations.

"A lot of times, pitchers get guys on base and their first thought is to get a strike," he admitted. "So to be honest, I don't know if I'm all that patient when I get up to bat with [runners in scoring position]. I might be a lot more aggressive."

Thanks to that timely aggressiveness, Johnson has become an unexpected source of two-out RBIs — his 24 ranked third the National League lead, as of June 13.

That's giving opposing pitchers plenty to think about it.

FAN CLUBS

BRAVES 400 CLUB

The Braves 400 Club Club is the official fan club of the Atlanta Braves. It is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting baseball at all levels. Annual membership is $25 and includes a newsletter and the opportunity to participate in activities such as road trips, luncheons, the annual banquet, and charitable events. Send payment to: Braves 400 Club, P.O. Box 7689, Atlanta, Ga. 30309. For more information, call the organization's hotline at (770) 416-4539 or visit www.braves400.org.

MILWAUKEE BRAVES HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

The Milwaukee Braves Historical Association is a non-profit organization that promotes the memory of the Milwaukee Braves (1953-65). Annual membership is $25 and includes a newsletter. Send payment to: Milwaukee Braves Historical Association, c/o Express News, W130 N10437 Washington Dr., Germantown, Wisc. 53022. For information, call (414) 347-1212.

BOSTON BRAVES HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

The Boston Braves Historical Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to keeping alive the memory of the Braves in the city where the franchise began in 1871 and that it represented through 1952. Annual membership is $15 and includes a newsletter. Send payment to: Boston Braves Historical Association, P.O. Box 5668, Marlboro, Mass. 01752. For more information, call (508) 485-1423 or visit Bostonbraves.com. Oct. 7 - Annual reunion.

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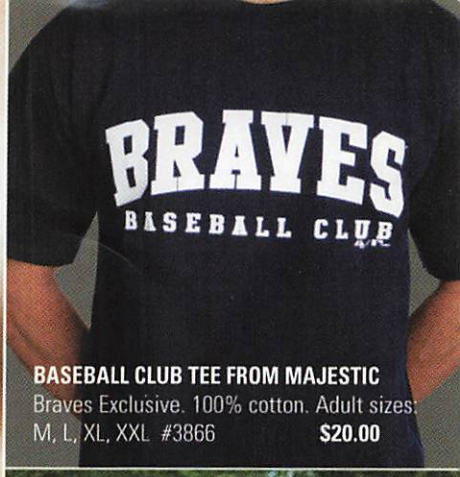

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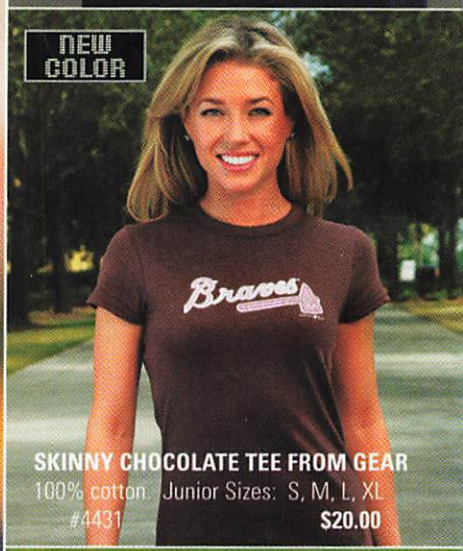

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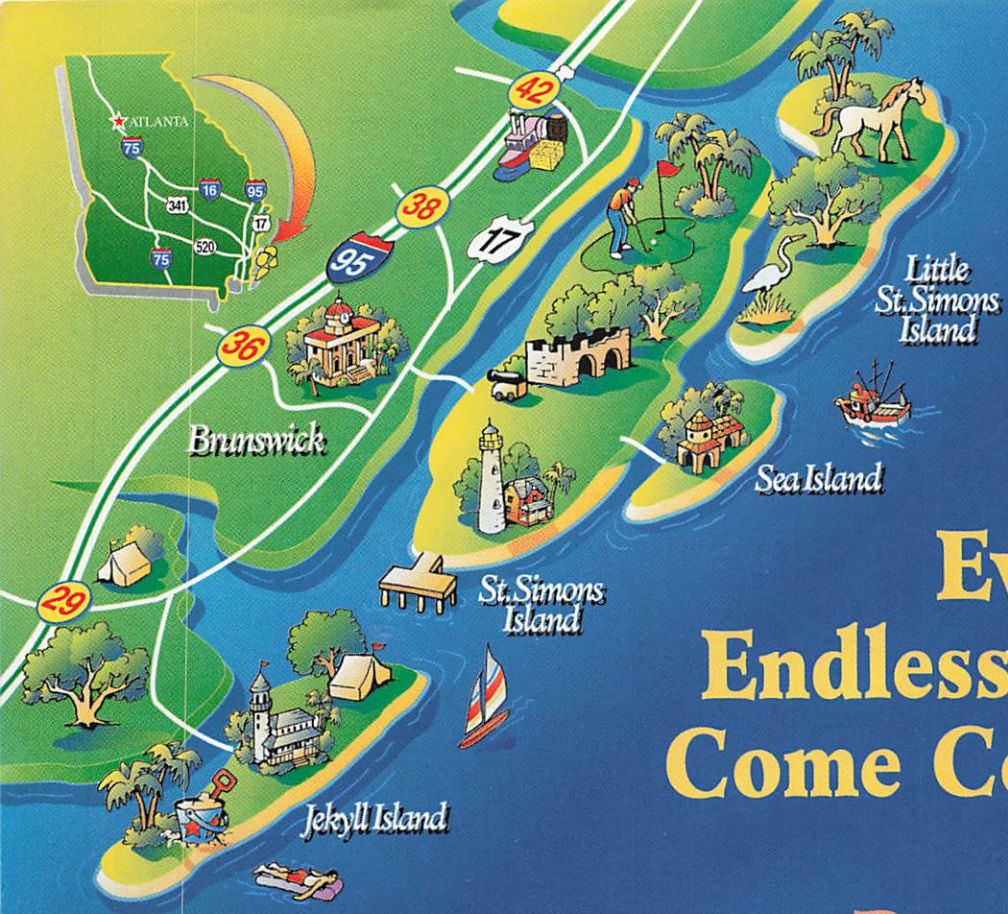

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